LOST WORLD

TIBET

BY

AMAURY DE REINCOURT

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STERLING PUBLISHERS PRIVATE LIMITED

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Lost of World Tibet

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To

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama

and to

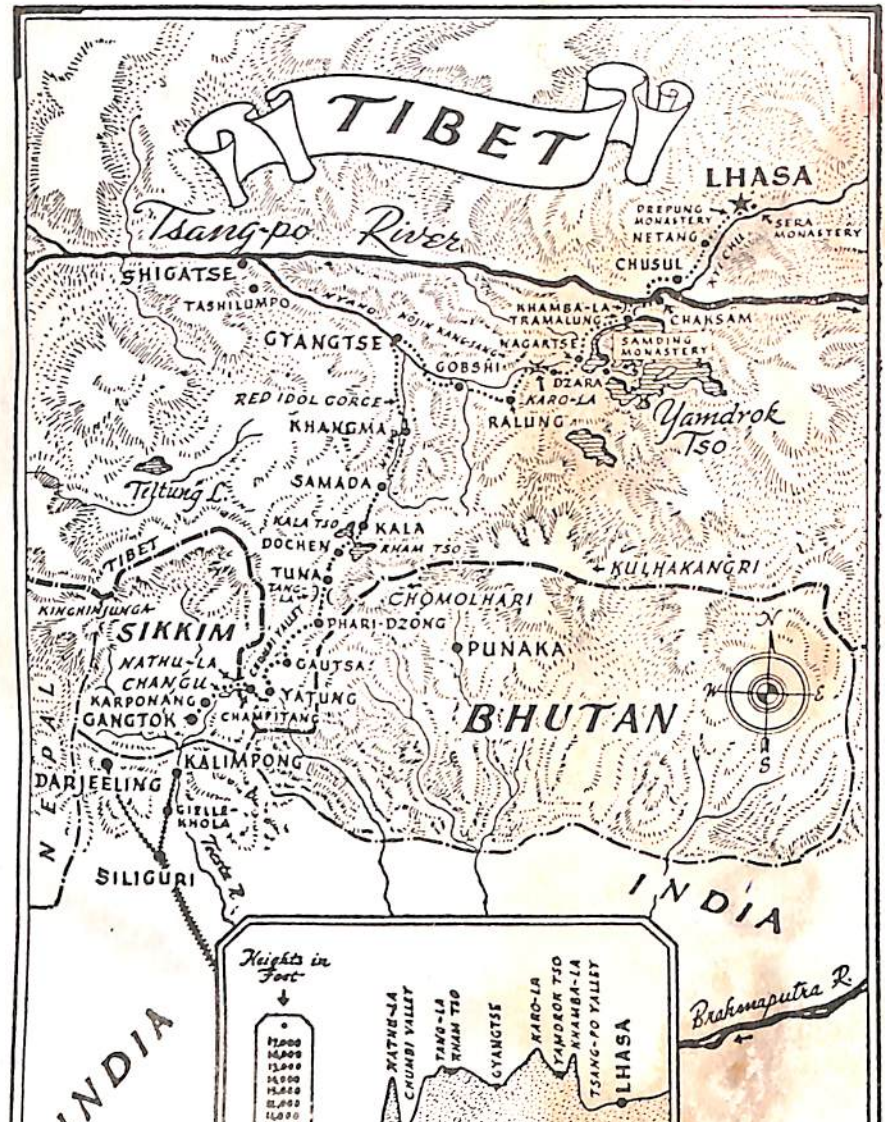
the people of Tibet

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

SOMEONE once remarked that the past is a foreign country. This certainly applies to the following work which describes a journey to Tibet which I undertook in 1947, some four decades ago and more than three years before the Chinese invaded it.

Somehow, on re-reading it, I have the feeling that this journey, to a land that was then the most forbidden country in the world, took place in another life and on another planet. Never could I, at that time, possibly imagine that I would live long enough to see that hermetically-sealed country metamorphosed into a favourite playground for tourists—but there it is.

Nothing has been changed in the text of the travelling account itself, nor in the over-all considerations of the situation in Asia at the time; these were inspired by my previous journey which had taken me through other closed countries—Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan. I have added an epilogue giving a brief historical account of what has happened to Tibet in the past forty years.

So it is that one fine morning in May 1947 I found myself on a train clattering into Siliguri, an important town in Bengal where the main railway-line from Calcutta reaches the foot-hills of the towering Himalayas. In my pocket I had the long-desired permit to go up to the Roof of the World and visit Lhasa, then a Forbidden City.

CHAPTER II

SIKKIM

ONCE MORE, I glanced at the telegram I had received from the British resident in Sikkim a few days before leaving Delhi:

SERVANT CHUMPA WILL MEET YOU SILIGURI MAY 18.

As soon as I had extricated my baggage and equipment from my compartment with the help of three porters, I searched all over the station platform for an individual corresponding to what I thought Chumpa should look like. I was still searching when a small, clean-looking man who seemed to be also looking for someone stood before me; without a word, he handed over another telegram sent to him by the same British resident in Gangtok. He was my man.

Chumpa was of mixed Nepalese-Tibetan stock, yellow-skinned, with slanted eyes, high cheekbones and a small moustache. He was born on the Tibetan side of Mount Everest and already a veteran of the Bengal-Lhasa journey, having accompanied Sir Charles Bell's pre-war expeditions. Though, later on, I acquired the habit of calling him "Chump" for the sake of giving him a nickname, he proved to be invaluable. He was, in fact, the most efficient headman one could ever hope for. He was very proud of his scant knowledge of English, though I could hardly find any justification for this pride—in fact I had to go to the trouble of learning a great deal of Tibetan before I could piece together the various bits of his broken English, after which we under-

stood each other perfectly. As he was to be my only medium of communication with the outside world for weeks on end, this intellectual effort of mine was essential.

Now, he immediately demonstrated his efficiency and capacity for leadership by handing out my various pieces of luggage to half a dozen bearers and directing them to the small train which branched off to my journey's end station, a small Himalayan village called Gielle-Khola.

Our train took two hours to cross the last lap of the seething plain of Bengal, running along the highway like a suburban tram. Ahead of us, the first green slopes of the Himalayas rose abruptly out of the plain and were soon close enough to swallow our clattering convoy. The engine dragged us up asthmatically through the ascending jungle, stopping at every wayside station, collecting on its roof an army of shrieking monkeys and, once, almost bumping into an elephant, before at last reaching Gielle-Khola.

While Chumpa busied himself with the luggage, I looked with curiosity at the meeting of two worlds on the railway platform—the dark-skinned world of the Indian Ocean and the yellow-skinned world of Central Asia and the Far East. I saw no more frail women in purdah but sturdy coolie matrons who can trot gaily up to 15,000 feet with sixty-pound loads on their backs; fewer coloured turbans or white caps but plenty of Nepalese wide-brimmed felt hats and fur caps of Tibetan merchants; after India's unsmiling faces, gaiety and humour below those almond eyes and broad cheekbones.

Chumpa soon came back and informed me that the resident's car was waiting for me with new instructions. I was to go to Kalimpong, Bengal's trading centre and gateway to Tibet, while Chumpa went directly with the luggage to Gangtok, capital city of the state of Sikkim.

After half an hour's drive through this Himalayan fairy-land, we entered Kalimpong's busy market-place and landed right in the middle of a brawl between some sleek Marwaris, who belong to the greatest trading caste in India, and a group of outraged Tibetan merchants. As we extricated ourselves with difficulty, I was struck by the amazing resemblance between these copper-coloured Tibetans and the American Indians of Arizona or New Mexico. It is a well-known scientific theory that they belong to the same Mongol stock, one branch of which headed across the Straits of Bering down into the heart of America, while the other went southwest towards The Himalayas.

My car finally stopped before the doorstep of a large modern villa, the home of Rajah Dorje, ambassador to India for the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan or Land of the Thunder Dragon. The ambassador was away but his son, Jigme Dorje, was there with his mother, a very dignified and energetic old lady who is not afraid of going every year on a pilgrimage to Lhasa. With them was A. J. Hopkinson, the able British resident in Sikkim who was also in charge of India's relations with Tibet and Bhutan.

We all sat down to a lunch of rice and curry, and I listened, quite amazed I must confess, to a fascinating conversation about the recent political disturbances in Lhasa. This was to be my first course in Tibetan politics. I gathered that the Maharaja of Sikkim, who is a Buddhist and a relative of Rani Dorje, had married his daughter to a Lhasa aristocrat. The unfortunate young man had been involved in a recent plot against the Regent of Tibet and was now meditating in jail in Lhasa, doubtless on the bitterness of life in Central Asia. He had been sentenced to have his eyes gouged out, a standard sentence in Tibet, and the Maharaja of Sikkim did not relish the idea of having a blind man for a son-in-law.

The Dorjes were very upset about the whole thing and were trying to use whatever influence they had in the Himalayas and in Lhasa in favour of their relative.

All the princely and aristocratic families of the various Himalayan states are related to one another: Sikkim and Tehri-Garhwal which are part of India, the kingdom of Ladak which is part of the Indian state of Kashmir, and the independent kingdom of Bhutan. All are Buddhists and look upon Lhasa as their spiritual home. They live on the border of the two worlds which I had seen meeting on the platform of Gielle-Khola, but feel much closer to Central Asia. Travellers cannot enter these various states without special permits delivered by the Indian authorities; as for Bhutan, it is almost as closed to foreigners as Tibet proper.

The conversation droned on. The resident was trying to straighten out various diplomatic difficulties with Jigme: exploitation of Bhutanese timber, damage caused by the migration of herds of Bhutanese elephants through Bengal, and so on.

Late in the afternoon, we took our leave and drove out of Kalimpong. We stopped several times to inspect the bungalows maintained by the government for the use of travellers. We were then halted by the police on the border of Sikkim state; I had to show my special pass which I had, of course, misplaced. The resident had to vouch for me and we arrived in Gangtok at nightfall, driving up the small hill on which the British residency had been built half a century before. I settled down for more than a week as a guest of the hospitable resident in order to prepare my expedition. This proved to be more complicated than I had anticipated.

Chumpa had already arrived with my luggage and his disquieteningly large number of relatives. I decided to waste

as little time as possible and a meeting was arranged next morning with Rai Sahib Sonnam, the secretary-general of the residency and a typical Sikkimese, if there is such a thing as a typical Sikkimese. The original inhabitants of the state are the merry little Lepchas, who wear red pleated capes and the most extraordinary cocked hats adorned with coloured feathers. Most of the servants of the residency were Lepchas. But Sikkim, as well as northern Bengaland Bhutan, is overrun by an increasing immigration of Ghurkas from Nepal who now make up more than sixty per cent of the population of the state. They are more energetic and hard working than either Lepchas or Indians, besides being the best fighters in the world. This gradual extension of Nepalese immigration in a large part of the Himalayan valleys and northern India will, some day, create a serious problem if Nepal decides to adopt an imperialistic policy.

Sonnam and I sat down in the garden and called for Chumpa. The wage problem was quickly settled; but Chumpa had decided that his father should join the expedition as a cook. The truth is that his aged parent wanted to go to Lhasa on a last pilgrimage and die in the Holy City. I was doubtful as to the father's value as a cook but, in order to keep Chumpa, I had to agree to his scheme. Thanks to this compromise, I was rid of the rest of his relatives.

Sonnam then asked me what I had done about the presents—presents for whom? For all the Tibetan officials I would meet on my way and in Lhasa, of course. I had not thought of that!

That same afternoon I canvassed the bazaar of Gangtok in search of fountain pens, Swiss watches or flashlights, then showed my loot to Sonnam. He scratched his ear with his long bejewelled fingernail and looked at it contemptuously —nothing less than a Parker 51 or a gold watch would do for

the Dalai Lama or the regent. But the resources of Gangtok were limited and I was determined not to go back to Calcutta to purchase additional presents. These would have to do.

With this off my mind, I was able to attend to the problem of getting transportation. The first part of the journey, from Gangtok to Yatung, would be taken care of by the mule merchants of the bazaar. Beyond Yatung, in Tibet proper, I would not be able to move without a Tibetan passport which would allow me to requisition a determined number of animals, plus food and fuel at the official Tibetan rate. Lhasa had promised to send the document to Yatung and all I could do was to hope for the best.

Chumpa, meanwhile, busied himself preparing numerous boxes and bags. As all saddles in Central Asia are made of wood and are exceedingly uncomfortable even when inlaid with turquoise or coral and covered with rugs, I spent a great deal of my time searching for an English one. As I definitely failed to locate anything resembling an English saddle in the bazaar, Hopkinson regretfully parted with one of his precious contraptions.

Every week, the British resident in Sikkim telephoned to Lhasa and reported to Delhi any interesting news about Central Asia. I went with him this time and he announced my coming departure to the chief of the British-Indian mission in Lhasa. Although he was anxious to hear all about the recent plot against the regent and the subsequent uprising of various monasteries, he did not mention the subject over the phone, merely saying that he was waiting with great impatience for the next written report. A great many people in Lhasa own radio sets and tune in during those weekly telephone calls: therefore, no confidential news can be sent over the wires.

This telephone system, as well as the entire organization of the trade route between India and Lhasa, is the result of a number of agreements between Tibet and the British. Following the Younghusband expedition to Lhasa in 1904, the British were granted the privilege of appointing two Indian trade agents, in Yatung and Gyangtse, with adequate garrisons to protect them. In 1947, there were altogether less than 150 Indian soldiers along the trade route. In addition, a chain of rest houses similar to those which dot the Indian countryside was installed on the route; every ten or fifteen miles, a comfortable dak-bungalow with two or three rooms and a kitchen is at the disposal of travellers and officials. A *chowkidar* or housekeeper is in charge but servants, bedding, food and medical supplies must be brought by the temporary tenant.

Before the second World War, a limited number of experienced travellers were allowed to go as far as Gyangtse provided they brought their animals with them. The British granted the permits without having to refer to Lhasa. Beyond Gyangtse, Tibet was entirely forbidden to foreigners. Since the war, Lhasa has asked to be informed of all travellers entering Tibet, even if they go only as far as Yatung.

My prolonged stay in Gangtok was a real necessity. In the first place, I had caught a bad cold; Gangtok's altitude is above 5,000 feet. The difference between the damp coolness of its Himalayan valley and Calcutta's seething heat was too great to be absorbed without a shock. Furthermore, one has to get accustomed to increased altitude as gradually as possible. I was going to live for several months at an altitude which was never below 11,500 feet; the first stage, rising from sea level to 5,000 feet, had to be the longest period of adjustment.

Life in Sikkim had its pleasant aspects. This is the front door to Tibet and the life line of the small state is the beautiful valley of the Teesta River which the natives call "the cleft of the winds"—a narrow gorge widening gradually towards the sky. Small rice fields hang on the mountain sides and towns such as Gangtok always seem to be suspended in mid air, between the invisible bottom of the vale and the eternal snows of the towering Kinchinjunga.

The jungle enclosed us on all sides and I went every day for a long walk in the neighbourhood of the residency. This was just as much training in view of the hardships of the future as an enjoyable way of waiting for real departure. The rest of the time was spent reading books and political reports on Tibet, tales of previous travellers and many studies of Buddhism with which I was already familiar.

In spite of his family troubles, the Maharaja of Sikkim found time to see me in his palace. More like a Swiss chalet than a palace and completely dwarfed by the Buddhist temple with which it shares the top of Gangtok's highest hill, His Highness's home was more modest a construction than the residency itself. I spent several hours with the old ruler in a modern drawing room, talking about India, Tibet and Buddhism. The maharaja was a very pleasant, cultured and philosophically-minded man, more preoccupied with problems of the after-life than with politics and the administration of his state which he left entirely to his capable secretary-general, Bermiak Kushog and his son, the Maharaj-Kumar.

The mule merchants of Gangtok, meanwhile, were making a nuisance of themselves. Their rates were increasing every day. Thank God, I was only hiring their animals up to Yatung, confiding thereafter in the Tibetan administration. Chumpa was buying the entire bazaar, piling up an incredible amount of junk which was never used during our

travels. He cleverly foresaw that I would have to give it all to him at the end of the journey as it would be useless to me in India.

With the help of Sonnam, things were finally straightened out. We agreed on a definite price with the mule merchants. Chumpa, having looted the entire bazaar to his satisfaction, found nothing left to purchase. My cold was over and the resident felt fairly certain that, by the time I reached Yatung, I would find my Tibetan passport waiting for me. Reservations had been made ahead of time in all the dak-bungalows and the trade-agents in Yatung and Gyangtse had been warned of my arrival.

At dawn, on the twenty-eighth of May, my entire expedition was finally gathered in the courtyard of the residency. Three riding ponies and five pack mules were running around while Chumpa, his old father and three muleteers were trying to string up their loads. The two merchants of the bazaar were there with the bill; it had been boosted once more, as I had expected. But I was impatient to get going and I paid them off.

The first departure is always the longest and most difficult to organize. Loads have to be adjusted, boxes exchanged —I refused to have my suitcase turned upside down and Chumpa insisted on having food and tea on his pony, knowing through experience that the sahibs are bad-tempered if they cannot satisfy their stomachs at odd moments.

At last everything was ready. The resident and his wife, both of them hospitable and helpful beyond words, bade me goodbye and good luck. We slowly wound our way out of the garden and into the jungle, following a well-known path. This had been my training ground during the previous week and I knew every square inch up to the last outpost of the Indian Customs.

When our last animal had been dragged over the customs fence and we turned with determination toward the towering mountains ahead of us, I felt the first exhilarating sensation since I had left Calcutta. We were on our way at last, on our way to the most unknown and mysterious country in the world, on our way to Tibet.

CHAPTER III

ACROSS THE HIMALAYAS

FOR A WHILE, we trotted along a path made of cobble-stones which seemed to be well kept up by the Sikkim authorities, but soon it re-entered the jungle where we were forced to tread carefully on mushy ground between giant bamboos and fig trees.

Nothing can give an idea of the luxuriance of the Himalayan jungle, so powerfully alive that it threatens to swallow and smother the life out of the unwary traveller who strays from the beaten track. We cautiously remained in the centre of the path because of the leeches of the undergrowth to which I had abandoned at least a pint of my blood during my previous walks.

The sun was slowly fading away behind thick clouds and the temperature was already cooler than in Gangtok. As we started gaining height and rose away from the Teesta Valley, the last murmurs of civilization gradually died down. The familiar noises of the bazaar, the horns of motor cars and the fracas of industrial machinery disappeared under our feet. I had the extraordinary impression that I was rising, through layers of clouds, from hell to heaven, leaving behind and below me this scientifically technical world which has done so much to increase man's misery. I found myself again in the clutches of my old escapist desire to find refuge in wild nature, away from other human beings and, if possible, refuge in complete silence.

I had found complete and deadly silence in previous travels, mainly in deserts. Yet, the silence of the Himalayas

is of a different kind. Here, nature is not frozen or burned to death as it is in a desert; it is so exuberant that you cannot forget it for a moment and, during the whole day, the thunder of waterfalls or the rumbling noise of distant cascades reminded us that here we were still nature's prisoner. From time to time, lianas and green creepers opened up timidly and disclosed bubbling springs. Subconsciously, one began to understand how this atmosphere could inspire Buddha to search for an end to individual life, not merely on this earth but also in eternity.

Chumpa suddenly interrupted my chain of thought and pointed toward a distant agglomeration of wooden constructions: Karponang, our first stage at an altitude of 9,000 feet. He then pointed down below into the valley and I saw an ocean of steam slowly rising, higher and higher, until it submerged us completely. All vision disappeared for a time. We could hardly see a few feet ahead but it did not bother us. The path was still visible and we could not get lost because of the absence of shortcuts or crossroads. When rising out of the dense fog, our feet still deep in the steam but our heads clear and able to enjoy a beautiful view, I had the distinct impression of riding on a cloud: amazing but true, I was now living an old war-time dream of mine.

The gradient was becoming steeper every minute and our animals were sweating like devils in hell. I decided to walk, just as much to relieve my unaccustomed legs as to unburden my weary beast.

Then the curse of all Himalayan travels came upon us: rain, uninterrupted and solid rain for hours on end. No cloth can resist those downpours and water insidiously crept in beneath coat and shirt, between socks and boots.

To say that I was relieved when I stumbled into the bungalow of Karponang would be an understatement. I

think that if a genie of the mountains had suddenly taken away the dak-bungalow and the entire village, I would still have remained there, lying down on the ground beneath a rock or something. My only consolation was that, sooner or later, I would get accustomed to this new way of travelling and really begin to enjoy it.

The animals were brought into the courtyard and Chumpa carried in my personal belongings. My sleeping bag was placed on a wooden cot and very soon a warm fire of rough logs was crackling in the hearth. I took off my drenched clothes and chose a book from among a half-dozen placed on a shelf above the chimney. Making myself a good pipe, I fell wearily into a comfortable armchair, anxious to get lost in a detective story and forget all about the Himalayas.

I was soundly asleep the following dawn when Chumpa sauntered into the room and shouted "Time to get up, sahib." To that, also, I would have to get accustomed; we always had to leave early, mainly because any delaying accident might occur on the way and it would be dangerous to be caught outside in darkness. I summoned my determination and extricated myself from a warm and comfortable sleeping bag, rushed into hot water and breakfasted heavily. Chumpa, who had already been up for hours, had the animals and mule men ready outside.

We left at sunrise and were on our way again. There seemed to be no end to this ascent. I felt that if we were not careful, we would soon discover that we had left the earth altogether and were on the point of reaching the moon.

We eventually branched out of the Teesta Valley for good and the track narrowed as the jungle grew thinner. Rocks emerged here and there until they formed one solid, gigantic cliff. Our narrow path had been carved out of the

granite and dominated a terrifying abyss, more than three thousand feet deep at times. The bottom could hardly be seen as steam was rising out of it and often encompassed us.

Mules and ponies in the Himalayas have the deplorable habit of walking on the outer edge of the path, for fear of hitting the cliff with their protruding loads and being hurled down into the yawning chasm. Looking over my right stirrup, the same fear got hold of me gradually until I took the safe course of dismounting. Soon, however, I discovered that at 10,000 feet and more, my breath fell short of requirements and that if I did not want to be left behind, I had better climb on my beast again, whatever the risk might be. For hours I struggled with the stubborn animal, pulling its head towards the cliff until its rubber-like neck was completely twisted—all to no avail. The only result was that it walked sideways and that its hind legs got closer to the edge until they started slipping spasmodically into the abyss, giving me a heart attack each time.

Chumpa looked at me from time to time and seemed to be highly amused. He decided to crown the whole unpleasantness and pointed down into the bottomless pit: through my field glasses I saw the carcass of a mule and a human skeleton, two thousand feet below on a small rocky ledge.

"A foreign traveller and his mule slipped several months ago. He wanted to enter Tibet without a pass but god Chen-Re-Zi did not allow it," Chumpa explained.

I felt for my pass, safely tucked away in my coat and was thankful to be on good terms with the god-protector of Tibet because the trade route to Lhasa is strewn with such bones.

Soon after, we met a descending caravan of mules carrying wool to India. Wool is the most important Tibetan export and we were to meet many such caravans accompanied by merry mule men—though what they could be

merry about in such an awful place, I did not know. There was not enough room on a three feet wide path to allow two mules to pass each other and we had to retreat slowly and carefully. We eventually reached a sort of grotto into which we took refuge until the descending caravan had passed on its way to Gangtok. We resumed our hair-raising ascent accompanied by circling and hungry-looking vultures, probably expecting us to provide their next meal. Dante could not have chosen a more fantastic and terrifying scene for his *Inferno*.

On top of it all, rain started again and our path became increasingly slippery. This continuous dripping on the rocks for hours on end was very depressing and not even Chumpa's tea and mushy sandwiches could cheer me up. On and on we trudged, frozen and exhausted, along the twisting and spiralling path.

Eleven thousand feet: all traces of jungle vegetation had disappeared; here and there appeared the oaks, maples, elms and chestnut trees of our temperate climates. They eventually disappeared to be replaced by pines.

Twelve thousand feet: to my great relief, we slowly came out of the narrow gorge and left the abysmal precipices behind. Our track became wider as we rode through a forest of pines and I could easily imagine that we were somewhere in the American Rockies. Far away in the distance, our valley opened up and disclosed the shores of a shimmering lake: the dark blue jewel of Changu. On the opposite side of the lake was a small village and, slightly apart, neater looking, the dak-bungalow. I reached it with the same feelings I had had when stumbling into Karponang the previous day.

Chumpa, who thought that he had come into his own and that I was so thoroughly impressed with the wild scenery that

he could get away with anything, was making a nuisance of himself. I had to reassert my weakened authority.

Apparently, in India and in the Himalayas, menial jobs are performed by lower caste people. Even in Buddhist Tibet, where there are no castes, this rule holds good. The lowest job was the lot of sweepers but I had neglected to take one along with me. We had found a sweeper in Karponang but none were to be found in Changu and after a heated argument with Chumpa I finally convinced him that it would be to his own interest to locate one, even if he had to go back to Gangtok and get one. My display of authority was so thoroughly impressive that, without having to go back to India, he produced an adequate sweeper within a half hour.

Changu's altitude is 12,600 feet. The argument with Chumpa had taken away my small provision of breath for the evening. I woke up every half hour during the night, gasping for more oxygen and I slept very badly. Chumpa's "Time to get up, sahib," woke me up, alas, just as I was getting accustomed to the rarefied atmosphere and about to enjoy a deep sleep.

Changu was our last stop in Sikkim and the next agglomeration and bungalow was Champithang, in Tibet proper.

The gradient was less steep now and, for a time, our path was made of solid cobblestones as if it were the remains of an old Roman highway. The pines became scarcer and smaller, the underbrush disappeared completely and was replaced by a sort of green moss. Whenever we walked on that moss, not a sound could be heard—it was all perfectly unreal, like a procession of ghosts.

Near a small pond, I saw, for the first time, a prehistoric-like monster, the huge black-haired cow of Tibet. Chumpa

looked at me sarcastically and asked me if I knew what the animal was.

"A yak," I answered.

Chumpa wore an expression of surprised admiration at such knowledge and my stock with him rose considerably. By now an entire herd of yaks was trotting around us, scaring the mules and ponies but harming no one.

Our path, once more, started winding itself around one of these fantastic cliffs and we dragged ourselves up under dribbling rain. This troublesome path went not only up but also down, thus increasing our labours, as we had to hoist ourselves up to the Nathu-La Pass anyway, and the sooner the better.

At thirteen thousand feet, trees and all traces of vegetation disappeared. Cliffs and precipices, stones and rocks were strewn all over this nightmarish area. The early sun was still hidden behind the towering peaks on our left and the rocks had taken on a bluish tint as if they were made of coloured crystal. The rain had gradually turned to hail and the wind was becoming something to reckon with: whistling pleasantly at first, then, as we came closer to the sky, roaring furiously, biting into lips and ears, freezing our damp clothes on our shivering skins, blinding us.

At fourteen thousand feet, hail gradually turned to snow, swirling white flakes which made us completely dizzy. Lakes, small rivers and brooks became petrified blocks of ice and our path was changed into an improvised and rough skating rink.

Chumpa howled at me through the wind that this ascension was the last one before the Nathu-La Pass and we eventually reached a point where the path stopped abruptly in front of a wall of rock. I dismounted and, dragging my reluctant beast behind me, struggled over this last obstacle.

If anything on this globe can be described as the end of

the world, this is it: the border between India and Tibet. I stood, panting, on the wall itself and looked over the Roof of the World for the first time. I had never thought before that human vision could carry so far. A huge mass of rugged mountains and deep valleys filled with clouds spread out in a semi-circle around the Nathu-La and very far away, on the horizon and completely separate from the Himalayas, an endless accumulation of snowy peaks emerging from an ocean of clouds. Here at last, I could contemplate the most forbidden land on earth, the mysterious dwelling place of gods and demons.

Very soon, all my men and animals were gathered around a small arch of triumph made of rocks and stones piled one on another and decorated with innumerable little flags inscribed with magic formulas and Buddhist prayers. Tibetans believe in prayer through windpower. Every time the wind waves these flags the fortunate owners are considered as having sent those prayers to their god-protector and Chumpa did not miss his opportunity: he pulled out something which looked suspiciously like one of my best towels and tied it to a pillar.

I had to wait, shivering, until all the men had made their devotions, asking god Chen-Re-Zi's protection for the journey which they were about to undertake into his mysterious and fascinating realm.

Slowly, we started down from the Nathu-La, deep in snow for the first time. The descent was so steep that I went on foot instead of climbing back on my pony, sliding and slipping in the slushy snow. The wind gradually died down, the snow stopped falling and, a thousand feet below the pass, the first rays of sunshine appeared timidly between two dark clouds. Snow and ice disappeared eventually and the good earth came back; small brushes, then pine trees reappeared,

in small scattered numbers at first, more numerous as we came down. White, mauve and scarlet flowers perked up here and there and when, at last, we were in sight of Champithang, oceans of bright red rhododendrons enclosed us on all sides. Pine woods emerged from those oceans and the silence following the death of the wind was interrupted by a strange musical whistling: swirling flights of multicoloured birds came up from the valley as if to greet us on our arrival in the Chumbi Valley.

This was a wonderful contrast in just a few hours; here was an earthly paradise, the beginning of the Chumbi Valley, a wedge of Tibetan territory driven between Sikkim and Bhutan.

I settled down in the lovely bungalow of Champithang and, after a restful night, continued my descent into the valley.

We rode along a wide path skirting the flank of a mountain, through forests of pines and silver firs, across a few shaky bridges made of wooden planks. Here and there, woodcutters were busy chopping trees and carving logs out of them. As we came out of the small vale our descent became steeper and we started winding down towards the Chumbi Valley proper.

Half-way down, we came upon a large golden-roofed building, surrounded with small houses and bungalows, by the name of Kargyu Gompa. It was the first Tibetan monastery I encountered but as I was to see and visit many larger and more important gompas on the way, I wasted no time stopping here.

Shortly afterward, we reached the bottom of the valley and the banks of the quiet Amo Chu River. Turning to the left, we went through the first Tibetan village on our road—

Phema. For some odd reason, this sight moved and impressed me; everything was so familiar and so reminiscent of small Swiss villages in the Alps, and at the same time, so strange: the first Buddhist temple, the prayer flags on huge poles stuck along the road and on every roof. Also the complete absence of machines of any kind and the marvellous peacefulness of bygone centuries when every problem of time was a matter of weeks or months and not of hours.

Trotting on a small path and following the sandy banks of the river, we met convoys of wool-carrying mules followed by cheerful muleteers singing gay songs. I felt more in tune with their joyous mood now than in the bleak gorges leading up to the Nathu-La. It certainly is one of the most remarkable qualities of the Tibetans that they are the gayest people in the world. Always full of humour and merry, they are ready to laugh at anything, especially at the expense of an awkward foreign traveller.

We reached at last the outskirts of Yatung and rode, in orthodox fashion, on the left of the large *mani* wall which blocks the entrance. Holy mani walls are placed near every Tibetan agglomeration, mani being one of the words of the most sacred formula:

"*Om! Mani Padme Hum!*" which means: "Hail! Jewel in the lotus!" the jewel being Buddha.

All Tibetans, high-ranking abbots and lamas, wealthy aristocrats and beggars, are ever repeating these holy words. A learned lama once explained to me that if repeated every few seconds for a long period of time, the music of those words helps put the speaker into a trance, acting on him like a strange narcotic. It is, in fact, part of a complicated science of sounds known as *mantras*, the words of power. This formula is written in countless numbers of places and, usually, on every single stone of *mani* walls.

As soon as I had settled down in the dak-bungalow, I sent Chumpa round to inform the Indian trade agent of my arrival. He soon came back with the wonderful news that my Tibetan passport had arrived, and he produced the long scroll of paper on which instructions were written in Tibetan. At the bottom of it was the black seal of the Kashag (the higher cabinet of Tibet). I was anxious to keep this precious document but gave way to Chumpa's argument that he would constantly need it in order to requisition animals, food and fuel during the journey. In truth, he simply wanted to display power and impress Tibetan officials and merchants as the Kashag's seal worked like magic everywhere we went.

I took a day off in Yatung; I needed a rest. Since we left Gangtok, we had been going straight towards the east in order to get over the first great mountain range which runs down from the north and separates the Chumbi Valley from Sikkim. From now on, until we reached Gyangtse, we would be travelling north.

Most of Tibet's trade with Kalimpong and India passes through the Chumbi Valley; as a result, it is a very prosperous region. All along the valley, small woods are interspersed with fertile patches of land on which barley and wheat are cultivated. As I was able to observe later on, the standard of living among Tibetan farmers, without the benefit of any modern technique, is far higher than that of Egyptian, Persian or Indian farmers. In the Himalayas, they have the additional good fortune of having wood, which is sorely missing in the plains of Central Asia. Houses are all built with wooden logs and their roofs are protected against the wind by huge stones which prevent them from being blown away.

The Tibetan trade agent very kindly arranged for me to have an armed Tibetan *chaprassi* who would go as far as

Gyangtse. He was superbly arrayed in red and blue silk and, like all Tibetans, wore down his back a braided pigtail reminiscent of old imperial China. He usually rode ahead of us and prepared the lodgings for the night.

Yatung's altitude is only 9,500 feet and we had to start climbing again in order to hoist ourselves, once more, up to the 15,600 feet of the Tang-La Pass.

However, we did not ascend immediately. For hours we trotted pleasantly on a sandy path winding round various hills along the bottom of the valley, between beds of wild flowers: primulas, anemones and strawberries. Very gradually, the valley widened and disclosed a large and flat expanse which turned out to be the lovely Plain of Ling Ma-Thang; it was covered from one end to the other with green grass trampled under the hoofs of an army of monstrous yaks, snorting and wagging their white tails. Following the meandering river, avoiding the marshes as far as possible, our ascent started as soon as we had reached the end of the plain. We went on, still following the Amo Chu which was now becoming a fast torrent rushing between forests of birch and pines, spreading white foam along its rocky banks.

I was, by now, getting accustomed to these daily rides and to my new routine. I felt fairly comfortable, often imagining that I had lived on horseback all my life and had never known anything but this pleasant and quiet medieval existence. We paused at noon usually, for a lunch of hard-boiled eggs, sandwiches on which Chumpa's dirty fingers were always printed and tea as dark as ink. During this meal in particular, I looked round and up at the mountains bordering the valley. Rings of clouds floated half-way up and isolated several villages and their golden fields near the summits. Those human settlements seemed, literally, to be floating on the clouds like small slices of heaven. What peace

and quiet if one were to retire into a small bungalow thus situated, at the far end of the earth and its troublesome inhabitants. Now I could understand the desire of these happy Tibetans to keep foreigners out of their earthly paradise.

The sun was slowly setting when we reached the wooden village of Gautsa and we made directly for the bungalow. Usually the *chowkidar*, warned by the *chaprassi* of the arrival of a guest, is at the door waiting for one of his rare clients. But today it was different. Everything was upset. People were rushing about, shouting excitedly; this excitement caught Chumpa who jumped off his pony and joined a group of villagers. He ran back and told me the cause of it all: the Dalai Lama's mother had just arrived on her way to India. So that was it!

The ruler's mother is one of the high dignitaries of the state and an ordinary traveller such as myself was going to have the great honour of sharing the same roof. Just in front of the door, her golden palanquin was resting on the ground and groups of silk-clad bearers and escort soldiers surrounded it. Chumpa was so excited that he forgot all about me, too busy joining the servants of the other party and gossiping. I did not even have the pleasure of meeting the exalted guest as she had retired for the night.

When I woke up, the following morning, the place was deserted. The Dalai Lama's mother had already departed and I was in a hurry to get going in the opposite direction.

Our ascent was resumed on a rough track, badly in need of repairs. The cobblestones were out of their sockets, strewn all over the place, hurting our animals' hoofs. We met several repair gangs on our way, usually thirty or forty men and women who worked slowly and clumsily. Very gay, they sang and laughed most of the time, especially when Chumpa started spreading the sahib's coins among them.

Shortly after having by-passed the last gang, we said good-bye to trees and wood altogether. We had reached 13,000 feet and from now on we were going to travel through barren plains and valleys in which trees are a luxury. No more wood for fuel or construction. All houses, hereafter, are built with solid stones piled on top of one another, without any mortar in between. The only fuel available was going to be yak-dung, a fuel which gives a minimum of heat and a maximum of nauseating smoke.

As we wound our way out of the last Himalayan valley, I saw, in the distance, what looked like a large concentration of stone houses surrounding a *dzong* (fort). It did not appear to be more than a couple of miles away. Yet, as Chumpa assured me, it was eleven miles. It is almost impossible to evaluate distances on the Roof of the World; the atmosphere is extremely dry and thin, with the result that visibility is almost perfect. Very often, mistakenly, I believed that we had almost reached our goal whereas we were still many miles away.

That distant town was Phari Dzong, the first important Tibetan city on the way to Lhasa and gateway to the heart of Tibet. Here end the Himalayas and there began the great plains of Central Asia.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE PLAINS OF CENTRAL ASIA

PHARI DZONG, AT an altitude of 14,700 feet, is probably the highest town in the world, with the exception of temporary settlements in the Andes of South America. It is surely the filthiest: as one traveller wisely remarked, it is "literally buried in its filth."

Refuse and dung having, for centuries, been thrown out of windows and doors and having piled up in the streets, the entire town was finally sunk into an ocean of muddy dirt and garbage. The streets have therefore been gradually raised so that going into a house means digging through the muck and going down into a subterranean cellar. The Pharisians, if this is the proper word to apply to the inhabitants of this pig's paradise, are quite adapted to their surroundings and are the filthiest among the Tibetans—which is a great accomplishment as Tibetans are by far the dirtiest people in the world.

The reason for this general uncleanliness is to be found in the climate. Glass is almost unknown in Tibet and windows are perpetually open, even in winter. In such a cold country, when blasts of icy wind penetrate through every hole and freeze everything, it is obvious that layers of dirt are required to keep them warm. Dung is the only fuel available and pretty much useless for heating purposes; as it is also expensive, Tibetans save on the heating and use it mainly for cooking. Therefore, the average Tibetan living on the windswept plateaus does not wash and seldom takes off his heavy woollen clothes and sheepskins during the entire winter. He

washes once a year, in summer, and gives himself a good rub-down, rolling off sheets of filth with the help of a rough stone. This is done poetically enough in a river or a lake, unless he is fortunate enough to be able to bathe in one of the many warm springs which bubble in the sheltered valleys.

The unfortunate bather usually catches a chill after his exertions and is sick for a few weeks; he feels better only when his familiar filth starts accumulating again. Even the standing regulations of the Indian Army in Tibet forbid washing more than twice a month.

If it were not for the fact that that extreme altitude destroys most germs, such unsanitary habits might have, long ago, disposed of the entire Tibetan population. As it is, they are a strong and healthy lot.

Wandering through the streets of Phari, I was also struck by the additional surplus of filth on women's faces. Clusters of soot and ugly patches of dung smeared their features, as if on purpose. The reason for this was explained to me later when I was told that religious teachings enjoined women to look as unattractive as possible whenever they go out of their houses, in order to spare temptations. Chumpa himself was disgusted and pinched his nose when going through the reeking streets.

I quickly took my eyes off them and looked at the magnificent surroundings of Phari. The city is located in a beautiful setting, at the beginning of the huge Plain of Thang-Pun-Sum (Plain of the Three Brothers) and clusters around the dzong, a fort built on the summit of a hill which dwarfs the town completely. Far away on the horizon, we had a new view of the snowy Kinchinjunga, the third highest mountain in the world, which we had already seen from Gangtok dominating the entire mountain range which separates Sikkim from Tibet and Nepal.

I had reached the outskirts of this muddy town and was walking slowly on small clusters of turf, watching farmers go out to their fields and traders walking with their wares towards the market place, when my attention was attracted by herds of yaks trotting heavily past me. I started thinking about the extent to which many people on this earth still depend entirely on some God-sent animal for their livelihood, especially in barren areas. Just as the Arabs of the desert depend for everything on their camels, Tibetans simply could not live without those amazing yaks: they work as beasts of burden, either ploughing or carrying loads in caravans; they provide milk, butter and plenty of meat on which Tibetan diet is based; their wool and hide are the essential part of their clothing; more important still, they provide dung, the only fuel available in most of Tibet.

But the trouble with yak-dung, I sadly reflected when I was back in the bungalow, is not only that it produces little warmth, it produces so much smoke that I was compelled to choose between being choked inside or frozen outside. I decided that a taste of both was the safest course if I wanted to keep alive and went in and out every five minutes. Finally, I could stand it no longer, put on my warmest clothes and started wandering through the streets of the city again.

The sun was now setting behind the Kinchinjunga, slowly warming up the entire mountain as if red-hot lava was pouring down its flanks. The shadows cast by the houses hid most of the dirt I had seen during the daytime, and brought out more fully the wonderful colours of the passers-by: purple-clad Bhutanese who came from the nearby Land of the Thunder Dragon or Chinese traders robed in long, blue silk gowns, followed by caravans of mules carrying wool, gold and borax which they purchase for bricks of tea. Red-robed lamas were wandering near the small monastery, some

deep in ardent discussions which I hope, for the sake of their souls, were theological; others were buying food at poorly supplied stores.

The noise of a violent discussion attracted my attention and, curious as usual, I walked over to the store where it seemed to be taking place. As luck would have it, I found Chumpa lying on a carpet, red with anger or rather as red as his yellow skin could get. He was arguing with a local broker and trying to negotiate our Indian rupees against Tibetan currency.

"You see, sahib, he pretends that Indian rupees are inflated and worth less than the more stable Tibetan currency," was Chumpa's explanation. But he had a surprise coming to them and was only pretending to be furious: he produced my passport. The effect was immediate: the Tibetans got up and pulled out their tongues at me (a great sign of respect in Tibet) and bowed a great many times. Then, without any more trouble or argument, paper *trangkas* and silver *saungs*, the main units of Tibetan currency, poured out and filled Chumpa's pouch. I discovered, later on, that this sort of argument became a regular feature wherever we went: Chumpa would start his negotiations, pretending that he had no official paper whatever. When the argument reached its peak, he would pull out the passport and enjoy his triumph when the submissive Tibetans gave up their goods at the official rate. He would then come to me, give me the figures and always had the impudence to add:

"You see, sahib, I am a good business man."

I did not rebuke him this time; the merchants of Phari are notorious for being the most rapacious moneylenders on this side of the Himalayas and I did not in the least feel sorry for them.

We departed earlier than usual the following morning as we had a long stretch in front of us: the crossing of the

entire Plain of Thang-Pun-Sum and the Tang-La Pass (15,600 feet). We walked on sandy ground covered with small rocks and occasionally interrupted by grassy stretches. My modest caravan seemed ridiculously small in this immense plain curving round a colossal heap of snowy rocks: Mount Chomolhari, the "Mountain of the Goddess Lady," which rises out of this flat immensity like a gleaming pyramid. Its 24,000 feet towered over us and, in the early morning, the blue transparence of its perpetual snows was fringed with red. The awe-inspiring splendour of this scenery was beyond description. The first sunrays shot out from behind the Chomolhari, illuminating a huge range of mountains running towards the north-east, from the border of Bhutan to the Yamdrok lake. Beyond this range lies a completely unexplored region, unknown to white men and Tibetans alike. I felt thrilled at being so close to an area which is one of the last unknown spots on earth and had to check a sudden impulse to go towards the east, towards the unexplored which has always fascinated me. But that would have to wait for another time. Tibet is still *terra incognita* to all foreigners except for a few limited trade routes on which only a handful of white men have ever travelled.

Herds of gazelles and wild blue sheep crossed our path several times; but as we came nearer to the Tang-La and our altitude increased, all traces of life, whether animal or vegetable, disappeared. Instead, we had the doubtful pleasure of fighting a violent hail storm and this powerful barrage seemed to indicate the gods' unwillingness to let us go any further into Tibet. There is no obstacle on those wide plains to prevent the gales from reaching incredible speeds and they attain the maximum of their violence in early afternoon. All the travelling consequently has to be done in the morning.

I personally thought that even the morning was pretty

painful as we struggled onwards, almost swept away by the hurricane, our faces cut up by the large pieces of ice thrown against us. We kept our noses inside our jackets as much as we could, abandoned the coarse strings with which we guided our mules and I applied a handkerchief against my face to prevent my cuts from bleeding. This beating went on for hours and only the knowledge that it was getting worse all the time, that it was too late to turn back, could keep us going, drenched and frozen as we were.

When we reached the snow-streaked pass, I peeped outside of my protective garments to count my men and animals, making sure that none of them had got lost, though God knows what I could have done if some of them had been missing. The men found enough courage to climb up to the small religious arch of triumph and, as they did on the Nathu-La, add their piece of cloth to the numerous flags fluttering madly under the icy wind. They walked bent in two, crawling on the slushy snow at times, and this little ceremony, with the additional prayers, took almost a quarter of an hour.

As it had after the passage of the Nathu-La, the storm decreased quickly as we came down the gentle slopes of the Tang-La. I could see our destination for the night quite clearly: the small hamlet of Tuna, fourteen miles away. To me, it looked as if it was barely two miles. We trudged on for hours and I know of few things more exasperating than this kind of oasis dangling perpetually in front of one's eyes and yet never seeming to get closer whatever the exertions and progress made on the road.

When Chumpa brought in my customary breakfast the following morning and laid down the bread, scrambled eggs and tea, I noticed with a certain amount of surprise that the milk was pink. I asked him about it and Chumpa replied

negligently, as if it were common knowledge, that yak milk is always pink.

I thought that it was odd and said nothing more. But I noticed a few days later that the milk was pink at times but could also be lily white at others. Eventually, I was informed in Lhasa that many yaks have bleeding ulcers, hence their milk's colour.

But I left Tuna, that morning, without knowing what I really had inside my stomach and gaily trotted across the last lap of the Plain of the Three Brothers. Between us and the Chomolhari, a large mirror reflected the huge image of the white "Goddess Lady"—the blue Rham Tso Lake, which lies at the foot of the mountain and sends its tiny waves lapping at the turf on which we were riding. Thousands of yellow Brahmany ducks, water fowl, geese and gulls were lying on the calm waters or flying round shrieking as soon as they caught sight of us.

A wide valley bordered with small brown hills separated us from the village of Dochen where I stopped for my usual and monotonous lunch: same hard-boiled eggs, same tasteless sandwiches, and tea which was blacker than ever.

Leaving Dochen, our path went across green meadows on which yaks and sheep were grazing. Near the shores of the small Kala Tso, which is just an outlet for the waters of the Rham lake, we saw a few gazelles running away towards more prosperous regions. This was the barren and desolate valley of Kala, a completely uninhabited desert; it was, in fact, Tibet as most people imagine it to be. The true nature of this vast Roof of the World then presented itself to my mind: a great many small, fertile valleys, well sheltered from winds and storms and quite secluded. Each one of these oases was separated by immense barren uplands such as the one through which we were just going and which served the use-

ful purpose of enhancing the paradise-like aspect of the more populated parts of Tibet.

We travelled through such an area the next morning when we left the bungalow at Kala and entered a very prosperous vale: the Nyang-Chu Valley. We rode along the Nyang, the "River of Joy," on long grassy stretches. Our horses had difficulty, at times, in extricating themselves from muddy marshes when we came too near the river. Small shrubs lined the road, alternating with willow bushes. Whenever we went through villages, a few birch trees and clumps of wild gooseberry appeared; terraced barley fields climbed up the grey hills, lined with well-designed irrigation canals. Further down the valley, small fields in which wheat, peas, turnips and radishes were cultivated, surrounded a group of stone houses, some of which were lying in ruins. These were old ruins, dating back to the invasions of hordes of wild Bhutanese some two hundred years ago.

Pig-tailed farmers could be seen ploughing these neat farm lands with teams of yaks; the animals were decorated with throat tassels made of bright red wool and harnessed with strings of jingle bells. As for the men, they were singing gay tunes in rhythm with the bells. I could not help dismounting and I sat down on the damp grass, watching these men, fascinated by the deep impression of happiness and quiet of this little paradise. It was the sort of happiness one would not expect to find on this earth but perhaps on another planet, the sort of happiness which springs from a very rare thing nowadays: peace of mind, the peace of a people who have an unshakable and deep faith in something which is far beyond life and death.

I was reminded of a naïve remark made by Pa-Lhe-Se, one of the few Tibetans who have ever been to the Western world. Speaking to Sir Charles Bell who was British Political

Agent for Tibet, he said, "In Tibet, out of happiness, many sing as they work. I do not find that here in England."

How will these Tibetans react when technical civilization reaches them, as it eventually must? Will they then ever regain that happiness and peace of mind which they will, just as surely, lose?

Chumpa was getting impatient and disturbed my peace of mind; but I was accustomed to that: I was only a Westerner. This was promptly confirmed when we reached our destination for the day, Khangma, whose chowkidar rushed towards us as soon as we arrived and told Chumpa that I was wanted on the telephone. The telephone! Was there no place on earth where one could be protected from that curse?

At the other end of the wire, I heard the voice of Major Pearson, head of the Indian military detachment in Gyangtse. He wanted to know when I expected to arrive in this great provincial centre so as to be able to prepare everything.

It is a miracle when the telephone works; most of the time it is out of order. Tibetan traders and muleteers have discovered a much better use for the wires; they pull them down frequently and tie their loads with them, having discovered that these metallic cables resist far better than the usual ropes, besides being much cheaper (if they are not caught at it).

The next morning saw us riding in the midst of small red shrubs, down the wide meadow which leads to some nearby hot springs where the lucky inhabitants of Khangma can take their yearly bath without being frozen to death. This side valley leads to a short cut on the road to Lhasa for those travellers who want to avoid Gyangtse.

As I was riding, I became conscious of a strange fact which had been bothering me for some time, though I had not given it a thought until now: I was dressed as an arctic explorer in the morning, piling layers of windproof jackets, pullovers and scarves against the freezing temperature and icy wind. Around noon, I was in shirt-sleeves, sweating and hardly able to stand the heat.

Protected against the soothing maritime influence by the Himalayas, Central Asia has the most continental climate in the world and the swings of temperature between day and night often exceed 80 degrees Fahrenheit. In addition to that there is little rainfall (200 inches in Sikkim, 7 in Tibet) and few clouds in the sky. Due to the thinness of the atmosphere above 14,000 feet, the sun is incredibly powerful and its effect soon becomes noticeable. Dark goggles for the eyes and a thick layer of grease for my peeling face were indispensable. In spite of that, my nose and lips were getting more swollen every day and at Khangma I had had trouble opening my mouth for breakfast. What was worse, I could hardly speak—this to the relief of Chumpa who thought that I shouted too much at him anyway.

As we went along, the Nyang-Chu Valley began to lose its lively and prosperous aspect; trees, bushes and grass disappeared as it became narrower. The flanks of the mountains became steeper when we entered a rocky ravine and the river, becoming a fast torrent, had to fight its way through a new mountain range.

Eventually, we squeezed into a deep gorge which the Nyang River had been digging for thousands of years and through which it now thundered, spreading its white foam over a jumble of rocks and boulders lying across its course. On our right and left, towered perpendicular cliffs, more than two thousand feet high. This fantastic cleft was the Red

Idol Gorge, so called because of the magnificently coloured *stupas* which dominate the roaring waterfalls: huge images of deities painted in vibrant blues, reds, greens and yellows. The largest, surrounded with a golden fringe, was that of Padma Sambhava, the famous founder of Lamaism in Tibet, and truly a wonderful specimen of Tibetan art; nearby and smaller, a red-coated image of the Celestial Buddha of Boundless Light. Under the perpetually blue sky of Tibet, these open-air carved gods seem to call on the pilgrims and tell them:

"Here you are in the most religious country in the world. Worship us or you will go no further."

All the worshipping that had to be done was taken care of by Chumpa and the men. Prayer flags were dutifully hung on the rocks and prayers were conscientiously mumbled.

I looked up at these fantastic cliffs and thought of the wonderful defences which the inhabitants of the Roof of the World could put up against any armed invasion. Tibet is really the most gigantic fortress in the world. It is a natural fort of a million square miles, standing in the heart of Asia and dominating the entire continent.

We walked on, stumbling over huge rocks and boulders strewn all over the place, splashed by the foam and dragging our weary beasts behind us. A mile or so further, as the gorge opened up and the cliffs melted away, we were able to climb on to our ponies again. Now we had reached a pleasant meadow on which stood clumps of birch trees, concealing the large country house of a feudal lord.

Small streams coming from adjacent valleys were rushing into the pacified Nyang River. Our vale, meanwhile, was gradually widening and finally disclosed the large and magnificent Plain of Gyangtse. At last, we were in sight of the goal of the first part of our journey.

The Gyangtse plain was very different from the bleak Plain of the Three Brothers which surrounds Phari: Gyangtse is situated in the centre of a very fertile and populated area. As we came down and our tracks left the river banks, an ocean of green fields cut up by a network of irrigation canals spread out before our eyes. We went on with renewed vigour on a country lane, very often trotting below the running water of the irrigation ditches and through small forests of poplars and willow trees.

Stone farmhouses dotted the plain, most of them white-washed. Nearby, neat little gardens covered with blue lilies and pink primulas were surrounded by low mud walls.

Chumpa pointed towards a vertical cliff at one end of the plain: half-way up was a small grotto connected with the plain through the medium of a small zigzagging flight of steps carved out of the rock. In this grotto lived an ascetic lama, one of many in Tibet who isolate themselves from the rest of mankind. This one, it appears, was a follower of Milarespa who founded the famed order of "entombed men." These devotees are sealed in complete darkness for a period of years or even for life, and are supposed to be able to develop mysterious psychic powers. Though sceptical, I was curious to find out what I could about this hermit, to learn about these psychic mysteries for which Tibet is famed. But Chumpa became terrified when I mentioned going up to have a look. He thoroughly convinced me that I would see nothing and that all my efforts would be useless. Besides, I was in a hurry, concentrating on reaching Gyangtse before night. But would I, one day, get to know more about the occult in Tibet? That was, alas, the secret of the future.

Farms and villas sheltered by small groves of poplars and willow trees became more numerous; the city of Gyangtse began to take shape on the horizon. We were soon near

enough to distinguish its crescent-shaped form, with its hundreds of flat-roofed houses clustering around a colossal rock shooting out of the plain. As in Phari, but on a much larger scale, a dzong or fort crowned the summit of this rock, dwarfing the town and the nearby monastery.

While I was looking at that superb sight, a cloud of dust gradually appeared, hiding the entire town and fortress; this cloud turned out to be a detachment of Indian cavalry coming towards us at full speed. A quarter of an hour later, thirty colourful Mahratta horsemen halted a hundred yards in front of us. I dismounted, walked towards the detachment, shook hands with Major Pearson and solemnly saluted the British flag.

I was delighted to exchange my miserable pony for a large Indian horse and, leaving behind my small caravan under Chumpa's care, we cantered through the large belt of green meadows which surround Gyangtse and its ten thousand inhabitants. As we came near the trade-agency, our gentle canter broke into a wild gallop and I was almost thrown off my horse when we had to jump over wide irrigation canals; I was so accustomed to the rhythm of small Tibetan ponies that I felt quite hopeless on a large-sized horse.

Shortly afterwards, we thundered into the courtyard of the British-Indian trade-agency, where I was going to spend a few days. The agency is laid out on the outskirts of the city and is an old fort which the British converted to their own use some forty years ago. Barracks, a dispensary, an Indian post office, comfortable living quarters for the trade-agent and officers of the detachment occupy the inside of the agency; a large playing ground lies in front of its main gate. All around, long lines of poplars and willow trees isolate this Indian outpost from the numerous villas which dot that suburban area,

I was ushered into a comfortable room, furnished with all those amenities of a civilization which I had almost forgotten: electricity from the agency's own power plant, a radio, a tub and a few armchairs.

Later on, in the officers' mess, I read the latest Indian newspapers brought up from India by the fast mules of the Indian post office and listened to some dance music broadcast from Delhi. With a highball in my hand, I might have been in any one of the numerous British consulates or agencies spread out all over Asia, outposts of Western influence, oases of Occidental comfort in the heart of a rugged and immense continent.

But I had only to step out of the trade-agency and, under the moonlight, the towering fort of Gyangtse, the sprawling lamasery with its hundreds of lighted windows, the distant and mysterious sound of trumpets and drums, the intense cold which made me shiver, everything brought me back to reality. This was truly the gateway to forbidden Tibet.

CHAPTER V

GYANGTSE

FOR THE FIRST time in many a day my sleep was not brutally interrupted by Chumpa's "Time to get up, sahib" and I woke up slowly and comfortably. As a matter of fact, Chumpa had completely disappeared; he probably thought that he might as well enjoy a little vacation, entrusting me to the care of the military ordnances of the fort, and he was out in the town already, busy planning the good time he was going to have in Gyangtse.

As we sat down for breakfast, the major handed me a letter which had just arrived from Lhasa: Hugh Richardson, the chief of the British-Indian mission, was sending some advice for the preparation of the second part of my expedition. As there were no more bungalows beyond Gyangtse, I would have to take along additional equipment: a camp bed, washing and cooking utensils, oil-lamps and fuel, plus three more mules. Two servants would be added as well as a new chaprassi who would ride ahead of us and prepare the lodgings for the night.

No one can enter Lhasa except on a few auspicious days each month. Those days are decided upon a long time in advance with the help of astrology and on the advice of oracles. The length of my pause in Gyangtse was therefore conditioned by the choice of a suitable date of arrival in the Forbidden City; if, by any chance, I disregarded the advice and did not comply with this old custom, any accident which happened during my stay in Lhasa would be blamed on me.

Immediately, I dispatched a servant with instructions to

grab Chumpa wherever he might be in the city and bring him back to attend to the details of organizing our new caravan. After having worked out a suitable itinerary with the help of the trade-agent, I decided that I would spend three days in Gyangtse and messengers of the Tibetan trade-agent were sent ahead of time to requisition lodgings in each one of the major towns and villages on the way.

With this off my mind, I was able to plan my sojourn in Gyangtse. We were invited, Major Pearson said, to a great festival which was taking place nearby, in the countryside: an archery and shooting contest. The Dzong-Pön or local governor had promised to pitch a tent on the field, to protect us against the burning sun.

With a new detachment of Indian cavalry, we started early in the morning and galloped along the country road, past thickets of wood and prosperous-looking country houses whose walls were painted with red and green stripes. Very soon, we found ourselves in the streets of Gyangtse.

This was a sunny holiday and huge colourful throngs of people were slowly flowing towards the suburbs and the festival camp. Wealthy men were dressed up in long flowing robes of silk brocade; these luxurious multi-coloured gowns trailed on the dusty ground and each of them raised a small cloud of dust behind which came the wife, whose black hair was caught in a huge head-dress, a red wooden arch studded with precious stones.

Gyangtse's flat-roofed houses were full of merry people who came out on their wooden balconies to have a look at the flowing throngs casually winding their way out of the town. As our hoofs went clattering on the cobblestones, every head turned towards us and the crowd opened up in front of our horses as had the Red Sea before Moses. We galloped through

Gyangtse at an infernal pace, spreading terror and confusion in the streets, to the great glee of our Mahrattas. But for myself I decided to slow down and ride alone for a while in order to rest my tired limbs as well as to spare the citizens of Gyangtse.

It was not long before we reached the large camp in which thousands of gay Tibetans were gathered, strolling about or squatting on the dusty ground, watching swirling dancers beating their drums or buying food and *chang*, the mild beer of Tibet, at a store. We dismounted and a courteous Tibetan attendant took us to our white tent, in which we found local-made carpets and cushions waiting for us. In the centre of the tent, a small table was covered with candies and pastry. Our tent was only one of many which were pitched on one side of the playing ground and which belonged to the leading families of the city.

While I was looking at the preparations, the sound of strange music started floating through the air; a nearby orchestra of lutes, drums and flutes was playing some old Chinese tune, heralding the pompous and solemn arrival of the Dzong-Pön of Gyangtse. He appeared, followed by a colourful group of attendants and armed guards, walking ponderously towards our tent through a gaping and respectful crowd. Like all high-class Tibetans, he was dressed in such a way as to remind me of a Chinese mandarin; his shining yellow hat was shaped like a half-melon and threads of red silk dangled on the wide brim; his shimmering gown was made of bluish-purple silk brocade, closed with the help of an orange belt and terminated by long sleeves falling inches down below the hands: an aristocratic distinction in Tibet, to prove that the owner does not have to do manual labour. Hanging from his left ear, a gold earring surrounded with pearls held a dangling turquoise pendant which he often tickled with his

long fingernail. His woollen boots were painted green and red with a blue vertical stripe.

His attendants were just as sumptuously garbed in long crimson, pink and orange pleated capes; but they wore fur-lined brown hats with turned-up brims and bejewelled tops glittering under the bright sun.

What with the strange music, this wonderful display of startling colours, the gay crowds and the blue sky, so deeply blue that it seemed almost black at times, this amazing world in which I now found myself appeared completely unreal to me. I almost rubbed my eyes to see if I could dispel this vision worthy of Peking in the most glorious days of the Chinese empire—it was as if a genie out of the *Arabian Nights* had suddenly created this scenery with a flash of his magic lamp. I had completely forgotten the toils and tribulations, dangers and discomforts of the journey.

The music ceased as subtly as it had started and I came out of my daydreams to realize that the governor was speaking. With the most exquisite politeness and smiling courtesy, the Dzong-Pön greeted me and expressed the hope that my stay in Tibet would be pleasant. I handed him a white silk scarf or *khata* which is customary when meeting someone formally in Tibet, and received another scarf in exchange.

He then retired to his tent as ceremoniously as he had come to ours and gave the signal for the games to start, just as a medieval lord would have ordered his colourful knights to begin their tournament.

These Tibetan knights certainly had nothing to envy their former European counterparts as far as appearances went. They were grouped at one end of the field with their ponies and personal attendants; each horseman was equipped with bow and arrows, and an old gun or matchlock—these guns

are long pieces of iron with two prongs fitted on their muzzle so as to steady the weapon when firing. The horsemen were beautifully arrayed in purple and green brocades, covered with huge wide-brimmed hats decorated with red silk threads hanging from their brims.

At a given signal, the first one in line rushed forward and galloped towards the centre of the field where a target was nailed on a pole; he aimed with his musket, fired and, more often than not, missed. Still galloping furiously, he hastily put away his musket, got hold of his bow and pulled out an arrow. Towards the end of the field, he aimed at a piece of red cloth dangling on a rope and shot his arrow.

Some of those brilliant horsemen let their guns fall on the ground, others spilled their arrows; one of them even lost his balance and fell flat on his head. Each time a contestant started, the crowd shouted encouragements and whenever a challenger displayed awkwardness, it roared with laughter. Not once did I see signs of anger or bad temper among these sportsmen, however unsuccessful they were.

As my eyes wandered over the crowd of onlookers, I caught sight of Chumpa among the horsemen, fooling round with a bow and arrow. Instead of getting busy preparing our next journey, Chumpa was showing off to some of his friends, apparently trying to convince one of the challengers to let him take his place; an agreement seemed to be reached and Chumpa climbed on a nervous pony. I got hold of my field glasses and took a closer look as I did not think much of Chumpa's accomplishments as a horseman. Was that idiot going to break his neck in this difficult contest? The gods probably decided against it; the challenger was only playing a joke and pricked the pony with one of his arrows. Chumpa was sent flying through the air and landed ten feet from his point of departure, bruised and humiliated, amid roars of

laughter from the crowd. At a distance I joined in the laughter but thought it better not to mention this incident when I saw him that same evening, limping into the fort.

The bright sun was slowly setting behind Gyangtse's huge rock, lighting up the fortress as if it were smearing its massive walls with blood. Darkness fell swiftly and a chill wind blew as we rode back to the agency in a hurry. An important dinner was to be given by the trade-agent in honour of the Tibetan goodwill mission to India and China.

The members of the mission were just back from their long journey, fairly satisfied with themselves although their reception in Nanking had not been what they had expected. The Chinese are always anxious to convey to the world the impression that they own Tibet and they exploited the presence of the Tibetans to their full advantage. The mission had gone to China with two definite purposes: to settle once and for all the demarcation of the border between their respective countries and to oblige Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek to recognize Tibet's complete independence.

The Chinese minister for Foreign Affairs refused to see them and they were referred to the Commission for Tibetan and Mongolian Affairs in Nanking. The commission referred them to the Chinese National Assembly to which their requests had been forwarded and invited the Tibetans to attend its next session. When they arrived, the Tibetans were seated, on purpose, in the midst of the Chinese delegates. Cameras flashed and shortly afterwards Chinese newspapers published their photographs informing the world that Tibet had elected delegates to the Chinese National Assembly, thus conveying the idea that Tibet was an integral part of China.

Nevertheless, Thubden Dzasa, the chief of the goodwill mission, was in high spirits as he sat down in the agency's

comfortable drawing-room, carefully arranging his crackling silk gown in an armchair. He proudly handed his visiting cards to all the guests; they had been printed in India with great care and he expected to make a deep impression with them in Lhasa. He had enjoyed immensely his journey in the outside world and, before going back to make his verbal report to the regent, he intended to take time off and spend a few weeks in his vast estates near Gyangtse.

After a typical Indian dinner of rice, curry and *chapatis*, we all went down into the spacious garden where thirty Mahrattas were going to display their acrobatic talents and show us some Indian dances. All the high lamas of Gyangtse were present and I understood that this exhibition was a return invitation for a session of devil-dances by the monks, given a few days before in the monastery, which I had, unfortunately, missed.

For several hours, Indian drums and flutes sounded throughout Gyangtse's peaceful countryside while the Mahrattas, flaming torches in hand, executed wild war-dances to the delight of the crowd of Tibetan onlookers. In spite of the pacifist influence of Buddhism, Tibetans are, by instinct, war-like and fearless; they love any kind of struggle, whether it is against devils or human beings. The lamas compared this exhibition very favourably with their own devil-dances and thanked their host profusely as they departed.

The Palkhor Choide, the great monastery of Gyangtse, was swarming with red-robed lamas as we passed through the main gate on the following morning. We had been invited by the abbot to come and visit extensively this *gompa* which, with its eleven hundred monks, is medium-sized by Tibetan standards. This was the first time that I went into a Tibetan

monastery and I could not have made a better choice for a first contact.

The Palkhor Choide, or Residence of the Illustrious Circle of Pilgrimage, covers the entire slope of a rocky hill, leaning against the huge fortress of Gyangtse. Its crescent-shaped walls enclose a heap of buildings rising up in tiers to the summit of the hill, some three hundred feet above the plain. Out of this great amphitheatre, gold-plated roofs glisten in the sun. The entire monastery is surrounded by a thick ribbon of fortified masonry reminiscent of the Great Wall of China and running along the crest of the hill.

As our hoofs clattered on the polished ground of pebbles and mortar inside the main courtyard, bevies of shaven-headed *trapas*, or monks studying to become lamas, rushed towards our horses and helped us down. On our left was the huge *chorten*, a sort of cenotaph built like a multi-facet pyramid, crowned with a gilded cone and topped with a tiny gold crescent and flame. These *chortens* are supposed to symbolize the five elements which are, starting from the ground: earth, water and fire; the crescent represents the air and the flame is ether. On each one of its floors, small open chapels contain the relics of saints and bodhisats.

The abbot's dwelling happened to be almost on top of the hill and we had to climb innumerable steps before stumbling breathlessly into his private chapel—a study where candies and cookies were waiting for us.

The high lama was a delightful host and a tireless questioner. Our little chat through a clumsy interpreter seemed like a slow-motion picture.

"How many years does the learned sahib intend to spend in Tibet?"

"Alas," I replied, "I have not been granted the privilege of a long sojourn. Only a few months have been allotted to me."

"Dear me, dear me," said the abbot, sincerely concerned at such misfortune.

We talked about India and aeroplane services.

"How long does it take to fly from Calcutta to London?"

"Approximately two days," I replied.

"Impossible, I won't believe it," said the abbot with determination.

He thought awhile then asked:

"And how long from Calcutta to Delhi?"

"Four hours," I said.

He laughed uproariously and added:

"I know, I know. So you must be right about London."

He clapped his hands and a young trapa brought in three cups of steaming buttered tea. This was the first time that I tasted the staple food of Tibet and I must confess that I thought the mere smell of it nauseating. Here is the recipe: tea, which is grown in China and carried to Tibet in brick-shape, is mixed with a soda that is found on the banks of rivers or margins of lakes. The mixture is thrown into a huge cauldron and tepid water is poured over it. The whole lot is then boiled. Salt and rancid butter, several years old if possible, soon join this boiling soup and the buttered tea is churned. Very often, the flavour is enhanced with the addition of yak-dung.

Oddly enough, this disgusting-sounding mixture tastes good when one gets accustomed to it. Tibetans enjoy it tremendously and usually drink this national concoction forty or fifty times a day. As I had to be social in Lhasa, I could not do with less than a dozen cups daily. I need scarcely add that as soon as I was back in India, I had to take a long rest in a hospital because of stomach trouble.

Our reserve of small talk having been exhausted, the abbot kindly suggested a visit to the monastery, which we eagerly

accepted. Leaving his house, we went down numerous flights of steps until we reached the threshold of a small temple. A service was in progress and the prayer hall contained several hundred lamas, garbed in dark red cloaks and seated on long rows of cushions. Each row faced the other and in front of every lama were a small bell or *dilbu* and a thunderbolt sceptre or *dorje*, both made of brass. The dilbu, which is female, symbolizes knowledge, while the dorje, which is male, symbolizes method. Both of them together symbolize what is the most important notion to all Buddhist:—wisdom.

We were not allowed in, however, and I had to wait until I arrived in Lhasa to be allowed to attend a service from start to finish. We went up the chorten which towers a hundred feet above the courtyard and I admired the rich coloured frescoes decorating the small chapels. Following our exhausting ascent of the chorten came a long visit to the colleges in which the lamas live and which surprised me greatly. I could hardly believe that so many celibate monks in Tibet can stand such an austere way of living, dividing their time between their tiny dark cells with their walls blackened by the smoke of butter-lamps and the assembly halls where they pray or study continuously for hours.

The abbot was very eloquent and explained everything in great detail; when I told him that this was my first visit to a Tibetan monastery, he looked at me in a strange way and his educational zeal seemed to increase. On and on we went, through the large kitchens in which buttered tea is made in great quantities; its huge steaming boilers made of iron lined the walls blackened by the smoke and an army of trapas were busy preparing their favourite beverage. Then we went through the library where rows of holy books were pigeon-holed in the walls. These books are long scrolls of thick paper,

printed on wooden blocks in the large printing establishments of Narthang, folded many times and compressed between two wooden tablets. All the sacred books were represented and especially the holy of holies: the *Kangyur*, a collection of canonical scriptures translated from Sanskrit a thousand years ago and its commentaries or *Tengyur*. The most magnificent, the *Prajna Paramita* or Gospel of Transcendental Wisdom, is written in golden letters and beautifully illuminated. A great deal of the wisdom of Tibet is enclosed in these monasteries, most of it is still untranslated and secret.

On we went, through the great temple or *lhakang* (House of the Gods), a massive building on the outside of which hung heavy black curtains, protecting the splendid coloured frescoes painted on the walls. I soon found myself in the huge *dukhang*, or assembly hall, which was empty at this time of the day. Beautiful *thankas*, painted on cotton or silk and framed with Chinese brocade, were hanging from the ceiling; sun rays, coming through a few windows on the roof, dispersed part of the darkness and played on the waving thankas.

On to the main hall opened a great many chapels in which rows of buttered candles were burning continuously and where the all-pervading smell of rancid butter blending with the subtle smoke of sandalwood incense created a strange atmosphere, different from anything I had experienced anywhere else. The twitching glow of the candles cast an uncertain light on the statues of colossal gilded Buddhas which conveyed a reassuring impression of perfect poise and wisdom. But in other chapels, bronze statues of frightening demons and hideous beasts, painted in red, green or blue, lined the walls. In one of these rooms, the *gonkhang*, or Devil's Chamber of Horrors, these satanic and monstrous

giants seemed all the more terrifying as the faint light of the candles dispersed only part of the darkness in which they were half concealed. Monks slipped by us noiselessly, disappearing again into the shadows like so many purple ghosts.

Was this the same country and the same people I had seen yesterday in the sunshine, gay and carefree? It seemed hardly possible.

One of these smaller prayer halls was the personal preserve of the abbot. Only half of it was lit with candles; the other half remained in complete darkness and a heavy iron chain was hanging across the hall from wall to wall, separating darkness from light. Out of this mysterious blackness floated strange sounds: the regular beating of a drum, interrupted at times by moans and sobs. What was there in the darkness? An incredible oppression overcame me and I wanted at all costs to find out what was lying beyond the chain, [illegible] if this barrier symbolized the separation of life and death. I moved towards the chain and was going to lift it when the abbot put his hand on my arm and stopped me. I was not allowed to go any further and yet I would have given a great deal, just then, to be able to explore this darkness ahead of me.

The abbot turned towards the faintly lit wall and, without a word, pointed towards the Wheel of Existence, Buddha's symbol, which is painted on every sacred wall and in every temple. The undulations of the flickering lights seemed to animate the Wheel, and fascinated, I suddenly had the impression that the Wheel was beginning to turn, round and round, and that this motion was mysteriously conveying to me the great doctrine of Buddha, so that I *saw* it in a flash of intuition after having so often read about it.

CHAPTER VI

THE WHEEL OF EXISTENCE

LET US DISPERSE the clouds of the past and go back to the sixth century B.C.

On the first slopes of the Himalayas, in the small state of Sakya, an extraordinary man was born: Prince Gotama, who was probably a Tibetan by birth, not an Aryan as so many people imagine. Nevertheless, Gotama worked among Indians, experienced his various trances and final illumination in India.

In those days, Christianity and Islam were yet to be born. Judaism was the faith of a small Semitic tribe wandering in the deserts of the Middle East and Confucius had just died in China. But Hinduism was already powerful in India, with its numerous gods, complicated rituals and caste system.

Gotama, oppressed at the sight of human suffering, decided to give up the luxurious way of living to which He was entitled as a wealthy prince and started leading an ascetic existence, searching for the solution of the greatest mystery in the world: Why is man alive and suffering? What is his ultimate fate?

Six years of ruthless asceticism almost killed Him and He understood that the solution was not to be found in physical torture. Remembering that once, in His youth, He had reached a stage of illumination, He sat, as He had then, at the foot of a pipal tree, went through the same stage which He called later the "First Rapture", then through the successive stages of contemplation which, ultimately, gave Him the perfect enlightenment: the way to suppress suffering.

"In me, thus set free, the knowledge of freedom arose and I knew: rebirth has been destroyed, the higher life has been led; what had to be done has been done, I have no more to do with this world."

Gotama had become a Buddha, an Enlightened One. He preached many years, made a great many disciples who spread His Doctrine to the far corners of the earth.

Buddhism and Hinduism constitute the group of Oriental religions which are fundamentally opposed, in their approach to man's destiny, to the more aggressive and exclusive Western religions: Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

Oriental religions, cloaked in the most extravagant garments for the use of the worshipping masses, are, when one reaches the inner core of their doctrine, pure metaphysics.

Whereas Westerners put the accent on *faith*, the Orientals put it on *knowledge*. Whereas Christians insist on *charity and unselfishness*, Buddhists insist on *right views*, i.e. he who *knows* cannot possibly be selfish.

This fundamental opposition between knowledge and faith is perhaps the basic mental divergence between the two great groups of mankind, between East and West. Buddha based his quest on one premise: the necessity of putting an end to suffering. Christians, on the other hand, accept suffering as an unavoidable necessity before reaching the supreme reward: eternal life. Buddha replies: The cause of suffering is thirst, the craving for the gratification of the passions and he asks for the supreme sacrifice: suppression of the craving for eternal life.

Suffering was more intolerable in the refined Orient than it was in the action-minded, rugged Occident. The concept of individual life, whether in this world or the next, was not the precious thing it was in the West.

Therefore, as we, in the Western world, visualized our soul as an individual and indestructible spiritual element to which eternal life is granted, whether in Heaven or Hell, Buddha visualized it as a perpetually changing element, an element which survives our physical existence, of course, but which has a limited life of its own. Buddha teaches that it is ultimately destined to dissolve into the universal soul, *Nirvana*, as a rolling wave perpetually changes its component drops and eventually merges with the ocean. To a Hindu priest who asked him whether our soul was the same at different moments, Buddha replied by asking him if the flame of a candle was the same at that moment and an hour later.

The entire principle of successive reincarnations of the soul, which was already part of the Hindu creed, was therefore explained with the concept of perpetually changing spiritual elements, attaching themselves to successive physical entities, whether human or animal, but detachable and living a limited existence of their own.

But where Buddha and the Brahmans parted was in their controversy over the *Atman* or ego-soul. The Hindus claim that the soul is made of two spiritual elements: an indestructible Atman (self) and a Manas (mind-thought). Buddha replied:

"There is no evidence of the existence of an immutable ego-being, of a self which remains the same and migrates from body to body. There is rebirth but no transmigration. The very search for Atman is wrong."

Buddha enunciated the Four Truths, which are the inner core of the entire Doctrine and can be put into the following equations:

The basic evil is *suffering*. Its cause is *ignorance*, the consequence of which is *desire*.

In its turn, *desire produces action*. Therefore, *action* is evil, should be curbed and eventually suppressed. Anyone who has lived in the sweltering heat and exuberance of life of the Indian jungles can understand how well this distaste for action fits in the Oriental concept of living.

Action, in order to exist, has to be the tension between two opposite poles, between good and evil or between you and I. This dualism, Buddha says, is illusion. The "I" is an impermanent agglomeration of energies which is destined to be dissolved, sooner or later. It is summed up in the formula which Tibetans constantly repeat: "All aggregates are impermanent."

The Oriental name for action is *Karma*. Applied to psychic life, it is the law of cause and effect which the philosopher Descartes discovered two thousand years later and applied to the physical world.

Let us return to desire, which is a consequence of ignorance. Desire is the thirst for life and things of life. It causes rebirth after rebirth, and this is how the Wheel of Existence keeps turning round and round, the motivating power being action, which is itself the result of desire.

This wheel symbolizes the world of phenomena which human beings can experience through their senses; it is artificially divided into six sections: gods (mortal beings of a higher order), Titans (supermen), men, animals, Yidags (suffering ghosts) and devils (temporarily in purgatory). Man is only one state of being among many which we experience and, here again, we notice another basic difference between East and West: in the West, man is the only physical entity in which there is a spark of divine life. In the East, all physical entities or sentient beings, as the Tibetans call them, have this divine spark. There is no basic difference between man and animal.

The Wheel of Existence and its sections are only symbols of what is, in reality, a perpetual motion in which all elements are constantly shifting. This religious symbolism, result of man's limited intellectual comprehension, can be more or less compared with our own scientific theories which are all, in a sense, equally symbolic but help the human mind to grasp a small portion of the physical world.

Symbolically, the Wheel is placed in the arms and teeth of Shindje, the monstrous Judge of the Dead, who keeps it turning and in it are imprisoned those who are not able to rise to Buddhahood in their lifetime. Shindje is the motivating power of the Wheel, he is action.

If, through knowledge, desire is finally suppressed, action disappears, the motion is destroyed and the Wheel, in which the soul is imprisoned, stops turning. The soul is thrown out and projected into a psychic void, into Nirvana in which it merges and loses all individuality, as smoke dissolves into the air. Or, if we revert to our first parable, action is the wind blowing over Nirvana, which is the ocean; it detaches, temporarily, a wave which is a soul and this wave keeps on rolling until the wind stops blowing: the wave then sinks back into the ocean and disintegrates.

This hard and terrifying creed spread all over India like wild-fire and Emperor Asoka built it up to a state-religion in the third century B.C., sending missionaries as far as Greece.

Several features accounted for its popularity. In the first place Buddha's complete reliance on *man* who is able, if he is willing, to achieve salvation and liberation through his own unaided efforts:

"Rely on yourselves and do not rely on external help."

This is in sharp contrast with Christian reliance on God and His help. Buddhists are intensely proud and selfish, in

their way, seeking salvation by their own means and for themselves only:

"Devote yourselves to your own good."

Christians are more humble and, at the same time, more concerned about the salvation of others, in fact, of all mankind.

Christians transfer the tensions of earthly life to the higher plane of spirituality and this is striking when one compares the quiet peace of Buddha's life with the tragic tension of Christ's martyrdom. Where the Christian aims at spiritualizing this tension, Buddha simply destroys it. The word "martyr" has no meaning in the Buddhist world.

Whereas Westerners view *perfection* as an unattainable goal in this life, a goal towards which man strives but which he cannot attain any more than he can reach the infinite, Buddhists believe that it is attainable during man's lifetime and Buddha was often called the "Perfect One".

Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of Christianity is its conception of *love*. This feeling of love is too intense for a Buddhist who seeks suppression of all feelings, and who replaces it with *wisdom*.

Its decisive qualities finally destroyed Buddhism's chances of survival in India. For one thing, Buddha taught a religion of moderation in earthly matters:

"The Buddha does not seek salvation in austerities, but neither does he indulge in worldly pleasures. The Buddha has found the *middle-path*."

This doctrine of the middle-path did not satisfy Hindus who have an instinctive craving for excesses and exaggerations of all kinds: whether it be the fantastic luxury and debauches of a maharaja's life or the self-inflicted tortures of fakirs and ascetics.

But worse still, Buddha completely brushed aside the caste system as inadequate:

"Not by birth but by deed only does one become an outcast or a Brahman."

The Aryans who had created the caste system to preserve the purity of their blood could not put up with such revolutionary theories. Slowly and gradually, the Brahmans reasserted their inherited rights and they squeezed Buddhism out of India.

As it left India, Buddha's doctrine spread towards the Far East, splitting into the two different sects between which it is still divided nowadays:

The *Hinayana* or Little Vehicle of Salvation, so called because it is more metaphysical and less accessible to the broad masses of the people. Fewer people can enter the Vehicle in order to reach Nirvana.

The *Mahayana* or Large Vehicle of Salvation, more accessible because it is more emotional and has added mythical notions borrowed from other religions. It has changed a philosophy into a religion and brings its moral principles to more people.

The Little Vehicle spread from Ceylon to Burma, Siam and south-east Asia.

The Larger Vehicle went straight to China, then to Japan. Centuries later, or more accurately between the seventh and the eleventh centuries of the Christian era, the doctrine penetrated into Tibet.

When Mahayana Buddhism came to Tibet, it was already established in China and Japan. But it was from the south, from India, that the Wheel of Existence came and this doctrine was very different from Buddha's pure metaphysical teachings. It was strongly impregnated with Hindu mythology and its hard realism was considerably mellowed by Christianity's emotional influence.

The doctrine was introduced to the inhabitants of the Roof of the World by the great Indian *guru*, Padma Sambhava. It met the immediate resistance of an older and well established religion: Pönism, a strange worship of the forces of nature mixed with black magic. Mahayana Buddhism blended with Pönism under Padma Sambhava's supervision and formed a very distinct branch of Buddhism known today as Lamaism.

Lamaism became all-powerful, not only in Tibet but also in Mongolia and Western China. To Buddha's coldly intellectual doctrine, Lamaism added two important elements:

The Christian notion of *sacrifice* to which early Buddhists were indifferent and which became embodied in the appearance of "Living Buddhas" or *Trülkus*, i.e. souls who stand on the threshold of Nirvana and Buddhahood, and who could escape from the Wheel of Existence but who, out of an unselfish desire to *sacrifice* themselves for their fellow sentient beings, decide to be reborn. This living Buddha's voluntary incarnation is a great act of renunciation. This is, of course, in direct contradiction to Buddha's recommendation: "Devote yourselves to your own good."

There are hundreds of Living Buddhas spread out all over Central Asia and the Himalayas, the highest of all being the ruler of Tibet: the Dalai Lama or "Lama Vast as the Ocean."

The second element which Lamaism added was borrowed from Pönism: a knowledge of magic, mixed with a knowledge of psychic matters borrowed from the Hindus. This is also in direct contradiction to Buddha's recommendations not to make any practical use of supernatural powers.

There is a certain prophetic vision in Buddha's doctrine. Whereas Christianity viewed the future as a steady progress

of faith and religion, with occasional setbacks, the Buddhists see it as a cycle and have assigned a limited existence to Gotama's doctrine: five thousand years approximately. During the first half of this period, the doctrine would spread and grow; during the second half it would decay and wither away until a new Buddha, *Maitreya*, greater and more perfect than Gotama, would come and lead mankind on to a new and higher spiritual path. It seems that this necessary readjustment, result of the challenge of man's growing scientific knowledge, had been foreseen by the Buddha himself.

This second part of the cycle, this period of decadence into which we have now entered, can be, fortunately, shortened by prayers. And this is the spiritual task to which Tibet has dedicated itself: the Great Prayer, which occurs each New Year and during which every Tibetan prays for the coming of the New Buddha who will establish an all-powerful and universal religion.

CHAPTER VII

BEYOND GYANGTSE

THE SUN WAS already high in the dark blue sky when my new caravan got under way. It was a much larger cavalcade now, with the addition of the two servants and two mulemen: eight men and eleven animals altogether.

For the last time, an Indian detachment accompanied us for a few miles and we parted at the meeting of two rivers: the Nyang which we had followed northward on our way to Gyangtse and the Nyeru which we were going to follow eastward on our way to the Karo-La Pass.

I climbed on my small Tibetan pony and, turning back on my saddle, watched Gyangtse, its fort and monastery, disappear in the distance behind the large cloud of yellow dust raised by the departing Indians.

Once more, I was on my way towards the heart of Tibet and the Forbidden City. I felt the same exhilaration I had when starting from Gangtok. Then, I was going to ride across the greatest mountain range in the world and penetrate into Tibet. Now, beyond Gyangtse, I was travelling along a road which is usually forbidden to all foreigners, through a little-known country and among Tibetans who, for the most part, had never seen a white man before.

I could feel something different in the atmosphere as the green plain of Gyangtse gradually narrowed into a flat ascending valley. We rode on a white stony track, among cultivated fields at first, then through more desert areas. As the Nyeru Valley wound its way up towards the highlands of Ralung, the river sank deeper into the ground, flowing some

fifty or sixty feet below us. We trotted along, sometimes riding on the edge of a small cliff dominating the river and the few cultivated fields sprawling on either side of its banks. Isolated poplars and thickets of wood concealed a few equally isolated farms and country houses, often disclosing their walls striped in blue, red and white; but the barrenness of the valley increased as we went up.

The river gradually became a roaring torrent and our path followed a very irregular course. We were continually going up and down the steep cliffs on narrow causeways and I found it hard to understand why the caravans did not stick either to the torrent's banks or to the top of the cliff. However, our first ride, this day, was short: eighteen miles.

Nature's colours seemed to be more vivid than south of Gyangtse. Rocks were lined with purple, blue and yellow veins; tufts of green grass or pink bushes emerged here and there. Dilapidated stone rest houses could be seen on our right; they were built long ago for the convenience of travellers and each one of them had a small busy restaurant around which crowded mulemen and yaks.

As we went up, the valley became a rocky gorge and the path climbed up on the long winding plateau, a hundred feet above the river. We finally sighted our destination for the night, at the junction of our track with three trade-routes to Lhasa: the village of Gobshi or the Four Doors.

As we entered the small city, I was immediately struck by the difference of attitude between these Tibetans and those I had met south of Gyangtse. Warned of our arrival by the chaprassi, the whole population had turned out in the streets, lined up along the walls and waiting to have a glimpse of the white foreigner, of the *peling*. As our cavalcade proceeded towards the house which had been allotted to us, I was greeted by everyone in the traditional Tibetan fashion:

all tongues were pulled out, thumbs turned upwards, and hissing proceeded from all throats.

I dismounted in the courtyard of the largest farmhouse amidst an army of barking dogs fortunately chained to the walls, and was conducted inside, through the reeking stables, up a ladder smeared with dung and into a fairly large room with a tiny unglazed window. A few coloured rugs were spread on the dusty floor, hiding numerous cracks through which filtered the stench from the stables below.

Chumpa strolled in with the camp bed and my portable furniture, which did not amount to much. All the inhabitants of the farm, a surprisingly large family, conglomerated at the door, watching with intense curiosity the complicated setting up of the bed and of my portable washing-stand. The owner of the house, a typical Tibetan farmer, came in to greet me with hissings and his tongue pulled out. He was garbed, as all Tibetans are, in a wide and long greasy gown of Tibetan-woven cloth, pulled up and squeezed in at the waist by a cloth belt so as to form a large pouch. In this improvised pocket, he carried all the small odds and ends which he needed during a day's work. His long sleeves were tucked up and when he saw me looking at them he hastily pulled them down below his hands, so as to give me the impression that he had not been doing any manual work.

Much as I admire the Tibetan farmers' standard of living as compared with the standards of other Asiatics, I doubt if a night spent in a Tibetan farm will give to an untrained foreigner the illusion that he is staying in a palatial hotel. The night I spent in Gobshi still rankles in my memory as one of the most unpleasant I spent anywhere in Asia, though not through the fault of my very obliging host. As soon as I had gone to bed, and, closing my eyes, was in the process of letting my mind slither into the world of dreams, bedlam was let

loose in the farm. As if at a given signal, the most incredible, nerve-racking pandemonium filled the night from then onwards until the God-sent dawn broke at last. My room, whose wooden door refused to perform its duty and remain closed, was periodically invaded by armies of pigs who were sick all over the place, barking dogs dropping vermin on my clothes and in my open suitcase, goats and cackling hens who took such a fancy to my blankets that they tore them to pieces. My quarters had become Noah's Ark and I had to call Chumpa, from time to time, to get at least part of this animal world out of the place. When dawn did finally break, I was more exhausted after this nightmarish night than if I had been riding non-stop since Yatung.

Leaving Gobshi as quickly as possible, I noticed that the temperature was colder than in Gyangtse. The gorge was opening up and we went through the wide valley of the Ralung River, the Valley of Horns. Small villages lined the mountainsides and numerous cultivated fields of peas and barley dotted the narrow, winding plateau, dominating the roaring torrent. The vibrant colours of rocks and trees were enhanced by the red and blue stripes decorating the walls of farmhouses and small monasteries. Along our road, white, yellow and purple flowers were miserably trampled under the hoofs of my caravan.

Chumpa seemed to be very bad-tempered this morning and his small moustache bristled with anger. His unfortunate father and the sweeper had to put up with his acid remarks and insults. I had no trouble guessing that, besides Gobshi's sleepless night, he still suffered physically from his fall in Gyangtse. But worse still, he had forgotten to turn the prayer wheels of the monastery the prescribed number of times and he was terrified at the idea of the consequences.

We had therefore to divert from our route and stop in the small lamasery of Gyabrag. The monks were Red Hat lamas or *dukpas*, who belong to the unreformed sect and are in opposition to the *gelukpas* or Yellow Hats, the dominating clergy in Tibet. Red Hats are allowed to drink and to marry. In spite of his contempt for these heretics, Chumpa went in and proceeded with his religious work as speedily as he could. Turning in the prescribed clockwise direction around the courtyard, he touched each prayer wheel lightly and sent it spinning. These large vertical cylinders lined the walls of the courtyard; in each one of them, thousands of prayers are written on slips of paper and the motion is supposed to send those prayers to the deities concerned. Any intelligent lama will admit that the motion in itself is meaningless but that it helps the devotee to concentrate on good thoughts. Only the thoughts are important.

Watching Chumpa expedite his prescribed number of spinnings with a sullen look on his face, I doubted very much if his thoughts were as commendable as they should have been. But at least his acerbity disappeared and we were able to resume our journey.

The valley narrowed again into a gorge. Dark streaks of black limestone stained the yellow and grey mountain flanks. One of the sights of Tibet is the numerous carcasses of mules and yaks, such as I saw now, lying on the side of the road. They are partly covered with flesh and the vultures seemed to be doing a neat job of devouring the animals methodically, section by section. The reason for this lack of haste, apparently, is that food can be kept intact for an incredible length of time in this extra dry climate which acts like a gigantic ice-box. Grain can be kept for centuries, meat for many years when buried in deep cellars. Travellers riding along the same path several years after their previous

voyage, are often amazed when they recognize the same carcass with only slightly less flesh than the previous time.

We met many noisy caravans coming from the opposite direction, mostly of yaks used as pack animals. They carried wool, barley, salt and borax which they were going to sell in Gyangtse and in Phari.

Following the line of the river's drainage, we eventually reached the large village of Ralung, situated at a bend of the valley; its 14,500 foot altitude places it at the limit of cultivation. Far away on our left, a new colossal mountain range was looming on the horizon, dominated by the snowy Nöjin Kang-Sang (24,000 ft.) or Noble Glacier of the Genius. This colossal range runs from west to east, starting in Shigatse on the Tsang Po River and meeting the great range of the Chomolhari at the Karo-La Pass which we were going to cross the following day.

We stopped in Ralung for the night. Fortunately, a good caravanserai was waiting for us. The chaprassi had secured a large room for me, comfortably furnished with red and green rugs, a Chinese-style lacquered table near the window and benches covered with carpets. The painted beams of the ceiling were carved into gilded images of leering devils and saintly-looking deities. The window overlooked a wide courtyard; along its walls were wooden sheds in which ponies, mules and yaks were stabled. Huge mastiffs were chained to the walls and their disquieting growl accompanied all strangers who came into the courtyard to look after the pack animals. The number of dogs in Tibet is simply incredible. In every farm and every town house, those ferocious guardians seem bent on tearing to pieces any human being who wanders in their field of vision and if they were not chained there is little doubt that they would secure a good meal for themselves.

As we had arrived early in the afternoon, I went to visit the great lamasery of Ralung, two miles from the village. It is the original head-monastery of the Red Hat sect and there, for the first time, I saw the shaven-headed nuns of the dukpa order.

The sun was slowly setting behind the crenellated mass of distant mountains, whose amazing shape had given to the lamasery its name of "Dragon." The last religious ceremonies were on, celebrating the coming of darkness and of its mysteries. On the roof of the main temple, the huge *ragdongs* and conch shells sent their deep, powerful blasts echoing down the valley against cliffs and mountain sides. Purple-robed monks stood behind these long, glittering musical instruments leaning on gilded supports, lining the roof and praying towards the setting sun. This small cluster of temples, houses and golden roofs set afire by the last rays of the sun, lost in the huge barren landscape, looked to me as if it was a symbol of man's desire to free the spirit from all its earthly connections. These wistful and strange vibrations of the ragdongs, sending waves of sound rolling like thunder down the desert valleys, suggested a new world of unbearable sadness—as if this scene were a preview of the twilight of the earth, in a few million years, when all traces of life were about to disappear.

I shuddered at the thought and hurried back to the caravanserai of Ralung. When I had settled down in my room, I had to put up with the unpleasant feature of all Tibetan hostelries, besides the barking dogs: the courtyard was full of noise and movement during the entire night, though less so than in Gobshi. The bellowing yaks, the braying asses, the bleating sheep and the jingle bells of the mules made enough hullabaloo already; but bedlam reached its peak when the patrons of the hotel and local traders

started loading their beasts at about three o'clock in the morning. Their curses and swearing, mixed with the dogs' barking, went on until daybreak. I was really out of luck and spent another sleepless night, as the altitude and the lack of oxygen had made me a very light sleeper anyway.

Dawn was breaking when we rode towards the Karo-La Pass on gentle, rounded slopes. The sky was clear and dark blue, the air crisp and cold. Trees and shrubs had disappeared entirely, as well as all traces of cultivation.

The thick turf on which we rode silenced our animals' hoofs and we went across a wide ascending moor, bordered on each side by red sandstone rocks. On our right and left, pink, blue and yellow flowers spread out by the thousand and gave a fairyland aspect to this large valley. Before turning to the right, away from the valley, I saw for the first time one of these magnificent caravans which become more numerous as one proceeds towards Central Tibet. Nothing could give an idea of the splendour of these colourful cavalcades of wealthy feudal lords and high officials. The natural setting was already magnificent: this wide barren valley and, not very far away, the translucid masses of sparkling ice which the great Nöjin Glacier pushed into the valley. Crowning this landscape, the colossal pyramid of bluish snows of the Nöjin Kang-Sang peak.

But if nature was surpassing itself, what of the contrast with a hundred Tibetans gorgeously garbed in gold and blue silk brocades, with their swords sheathed in silver scabbards slipped into their belts, mounted on shaggy ponies beautifully caparisoned in red! Shimmering and sparkling under the bright sun, caught between the cloudless dark blue sky and the dazzling ice of the glacier, accompanied by the gay songs and music of flutes and jingle bells mixed with the

thuds of hundreds of hoofs echoing in the huge caves of looming cliffs, this medieval procession was out of any world Westerners have ever dreamed of. Its splendour surpassed anything ever produced by the wealthiest Indian maharaja.

As the caravan came clattering down towards us, I saw a great many women in silk dresses, striped aprons and velvet boots riding on peaceful-looking mules. They wore shining blue and green silk hats with long narrow brims like jockeys' caps. As the wind was roaring near the Karo-La Pass, I was not surprised to see that all the women wore painted face masks of yak-hide to protect their complexion.

Tibetan caravans are organized with the usual precise protocol which rules the life of all Tibetan officials. In front came the servants with their wide-brimmed circular hats covered with threads of red silk. Then followed the masters who were groups of friends travelling together for the sake of convenience and dressed very much like the brilliant suite of the Dzong-Pön of Gyangtse. They never seem to be afraid of ruining their valuable brocades when travelling over such rough terrain. More servants closed the amazing procession.

I looked at my modest caravan, of which I was so proud only yesterday; except for the colour of my skin, there was certainly nothing about it to excite the curiosity or admiration of the local inhabitants who are accustomed to such a riot of colours. As the cavalcade streamed by, I was gratified to notice that those officials bowed and smiled with slight condescension as they trotted past me. But none of them stopped; Chumpa and the other servants had dismounted and were pulling out their tongues respectfully. Chumpa never gave *me* any such marks of respect!

We resumed our journey and turned to our right over a rough track strewn with small stones. The altitude was now

16,000 feet above sea level and I experienced more difficulty in breathing than ever before. Dismounting and climbing back on to my pony had become quite a problem; several minutes were required to hoist myself to my saddle and if the troublesome animal got it into his head to make things difficult I ran the dangerous risk of falling back on the ground and being unable to repeat this performance.

I was therefore very careful to remain in my saddle and gave up the idea of dismounting in order to take photographs. Chumpa, on the other hand, did not seem to suffer at all; he was alert and quick as usual. Of course, not everyone is born on the slopes of Mount Everest.

The ascent was becoming steeper. We forded several bawling streams and finally reached deep snow. Our progress was slower and I became more careful than ever to hang on to my pony. On our left, the glittering glacier had poured down the valley through gashes in the looming mountains and its frozen waves had stopped half a mile from the Karo-La Pass on which we stood at last.

We went through the usual religious performances: flag-hanging on the stony cairn and devout mumbling of prayers. Chumpa told me later that the new sweeper I had taken on in Gyangtse was praying to the gods to forgive him for accompanying to the Holy City an ignorant heretic such as myself. He was kind enough, Chumpa added with an ironical twitch of his moustache, to pray for my prompt conversion to the Great Doctrine.

The white peak of the Lhajagonak mountain disappeared on our right after we had passed through the grey stone village of Dzara and we gradually came down, trotting along a rustling river, to the zone of shrubs, trees and culture.

The valley widened and melted into the Plain of Tatang, a large meadow which in its turn widens and slopes down into the huge basin of the Yamdrok Lake.

This great turquoise lake, of which we saw only a small portion, filled the horizon nevertheless and spread out before our eyes as if it were a large inland sea. Halfway between us and the blue waters the important town of Nagartse stood in the middle of the plain, its thousands of prayer flags fluttering madly in the wind. As usual, a powerful-looking dzong sat on a rocky spur, dominating the entire countryside. The sun was setting on our left and its last rays played on the hills which bordered the lake towards the promontory of Samding.

In Samding there is a strange lamasery which, unfortunately, I had no time to visit. This monastery of Soaring Meditations is under the authority of an abbess, the only feminine living Buddha in the world. This phantom body is called Dorje Pamo, or Thunderbolt Sow, and she is supposed to be able to change herself, at will, into a pig. If I had been certain to witness this amazing transformation, I would certainly have made the worthwhile detour. But Chumpa thought it improbable that the abbess would perform for me.

Once more, as we entered the town, the entire population seemed to have turned out in the streets. A sea of curious heads, attracted by the rumour that a white foreigner was arriving, stood between my cavalcade and the hostelry. The crowd opened up and stood gaping, tongues hanging out, until I had disappeared behind the massive gates of the courtyard. There, I had to leap sideways to avoid being caught by a growling mastiff and was relieved at last to find myself in a comfortably Chinese-furnished room, very similar to the one which had been given to me in

Ralung. We had covered, today, the largest single stage of the entire journey—thirty-two miles.

We trotted under a cloudless sky, the following morning, along the western shore of the Yamdrok, the lake of Upper Pastures. Whenever we went through small stony villages, the reeking smell of rotting fish sickened me and, for the first time since I was in Tibet, I felt a certain amount of dampness in the air. This dampness did not prevent the dust from gathering in clouds whenever the wind or passing caravans blew it off the ground.

One of the dusty clouds ahead of us eventually disclosed a large cavalcade going our way at a small pace and Chumpa suggested that we join them, if they were willing to let us do so. I agreed and Chumpa asked a silk-clad rider to put the question to his master; very soon a prosperous-looking man who appeared to be a Tibetan merchant came trotting towards me with a beaming smile on his face. I was amazed to hear him greet me in a very good, though Indian-accented, English. He was delighted that we should have asked to ride along with him and he suggested a small halt now, as it was about noon and time for tiffin.

I accepted and he ordered his servants to spread carpets and rugs on the beach near the lapping waters of the Yamdrok. We sat down and I struck a good bargain, exchanging Chumpa's tasteless sandwiches with which I was thoroughly fed up for the trader's Chinese delicacies. He explained that he had resided in Kalimpong for a few years and his vanity was pleasantly tickled when I complimented him on his great knowledge of English.

I looked at this vast sea which is situated at an altitude of almost fifteen thousand feet above sea level; the circumference of its scorpion-like shape is almost two hundred miles

and this great mass of water is only separated from the Tsang Po Valley, three thousand feet below, by the thin mountain range and the Khamba La Pass over which we would be travelling tomorrow.

My trader companion talked a great deal about India, Tibet and China, three countries which he seemed to know pretty well. He travelled a great deal, mostly on horseback, and he thought that his was the finest life anyone could lead. His wife, who lived in Gyangtse, he saw only six months a year; but he found ample compensation during his journeys and his network of feminine acquaintances stretched from Kalimpong in Bengal to Kunming in Yunnan.

"All Tibetans are traders and travellers, at heart," he said. "It is probably due to the history of Tibet. You see, we Tibetans have always known that our first ancestors were wandering monkeys. You Westerners, anxious to preserve man's superiority over animals, have not arrived at that humble conclusion yet," he added laughing.

Curious to know more about the historical beginnings of the Roof of the World, I asked him to elaborate on his statement. While the sun was playing on the small rolling waves of the lake, I listened to the fascinating tales and my thoughts started wandering through the maze of Tibet's early history.

CHAPTER VIII

TIBETAN BEGINNINGS

TIBETANS BELIEVE THAT their first ancestor was a monkey who crossed the Himalayas from India and married a she-devil whose abode was a cave at Tsetang on the Tsang-Po River. Their descendants gradually changed from monkeys to men and when they came out of the legendary myths of the past to emerge in history, they were, according to the Chinese, "ferocious barbarian shepherds" who lived far away above the clouds in the lofty, inaccessible mountains of the west and who were addicted to human sacrifices.

Divided into numerous petty kingdoms, they were the most warlike and ferocious Asiatics of those days and when their first strong man united the entire Roof of the World under his iron fist, Asia trembled.

King Song-Tsen-Gampo (or Straight-Strong-Deep) was a powerful monarch and, at the head of a well organized army, he plunged into the impenetrable jungles of upper Burma and overran a large part of China, decisively crushing the Chinese troops of Emperor Tai Tsung. In A.D. 640 peace was concluded and King "Straight-Strong-Deep" received the beautiful Chinese princess Kyim Shang in marriage as part of the terms of peace. She thus became his second wife as he had already married a Nepalese princess.

Both wives were ardent Buddhists and highly civilized. Under their double influence, the king was converted to the Great Doctrine and he decided to establish it as the dominant religion of the Roof of the World. He discarded his barbarian way of life and adopted Chinese customs and manners.

From India, he imported many Buddhist scholars and gurus as well as the modified Sanskrit alphabet of the time. The great king thus set the course of Tibet's history under the double influence of India and China and not, as modern Chinese would like us to believe today, under the sole influence of China.

When King "Straight-Strong-Deep" introduced Buddhism to Tibet, he certainly did not foresee the ultimate consequences of his initiative. In the first place, the pacifist influence of Buddhism was more successful in subduing the warlike Tibetans than any military conquest by foreign invaders. More important still, his successor, King Ti-Song-Detsan, was fortunate enough to be able to bring to Tibet the greatest Buddhist saint of his time, Padma Sambhava. Both of them working together then founded the first monasteries in the country and, by merging Pönism with Buddhism, they created Lamaism which is today a very distinctive branch of Mahayana Buddhism. Pönism, a form of nature worship and the old religion of Tibet, then divided itself between White Pön, very similar to Buddhism and almost absorbed today, and Black Pönists, dangerous heretics who took refuge in the inaccessible parts of the country. All subsequent efforts of various kings such as Langdharma to upset the new faith were unsuccessful and monasteries grew in numbers and in power. Abbots often became the rivals of kings and warlords. Lamaism, octopus-like, soon invaded the political field and started assuming temporal power. The nobility was subdued and the kings became mere puppets.

The first king-lama was the abbot of Sakya monastery, in western Tibet. He started ruling his small kingdom at the time when the terrifying Genghis Khan had swept from Central Asia down to the heart of Europe and had established the greatest empire on earth. The grandson of this

Mongol conqueror, Kublai Khan, became the first Mongol emperor of China. After years of study and research among all the known religions of the time, Kublai decided to become a Lamaist Buddhist and the abbot of Sakya was asked to bless the Chinese emperor's political power. In exchange, the king-lama was recognized by Kublai as the royal sovereign of the whole of Tibet and high-priest or pope of the Buddhist world.

The rule of the Sakya pontiffs over Tibet continued for several centuries while the Mongol dynasty of China decayed and finally crumbled to pieces. With the downfall of the war-like Mongols, Lamaism slowly penetrated into Mongolia with its usual paraphernalia of monasteries, innumerable clergy and pacifying influence which eventually subdued the ferocious hordes of Genghis Khan. A Grand Lama was set up in Urga, the capital city, and since then sentimental ties between Tibet and Mongolia have been very strong.

The power of the Sakya rule was shaking, meantime, and the increasing decay of the entire Lamaist clergy was giving rise to a number of reformers. In the middle of the fourteenth century, a religious reformer by the name of Tsong-Ka-Pa, or the Man from the Land of Onions, came from north-east Tibet and revived a purer form of Buddhism in which the influence of Pönism was smaller. He urged celibacy on the monks, forbade drinking and especially smoking, and his reformers became known as *gelukpas* or Those on the Way of Virtue. They were and still are known as Yellow Hats because of the new garments invented by Tsong-Ka-Pa to distinguish his reformed lamas from the dukpas or Red Hats of the previous sects.

Tsong-Ka-Pa's reform was so deep and permanent that Tibetans often call him the "Second Buddha."

The Yellow Hats, more disciplined and better organized, were soon powerful enough to resist the Red Hat authority of the Sakya pope. A decisive innovation was going to give them complete supremacy a few centuries later: the creation of the Dalai Lamas and the birth of the idea of Living Buddhas.

The line of the Dalai Lamas started in a humble and obscure way. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, a modest shepherd called Protecting Thunderbolt lived with his wife, Sky Happiness, in a secluded valley of western Tibet. Among their many children, a young boy named Lotus Thunderbolt gave promise of being very precocious. Once, when the family was attacked by bandits and had fled, he was left behind, hidden under a few stones. The parents came back long afterwards and were amazed to find that the boy was still alive, guarded by a huge vulture.

Lotus Thunderbolt became a brilliant monk, wrote many religious books and visited the aged Tsong-Ka-Pa. He was soon given the title of "Perfecter of the Priesthood" and he founded two of the three greatest monasteries in Tibet and even in the world—Drepung or the Rice Heap and Tashilumpo, the Mount of Blessing. Lotus Thunderbolt became abbot of the Rice Heap and eventually died, bitterly regretted by all Tibetans. He was acknowledged as having attained Buddhahood in his lifetime or, as Tibetans say, as having "passed beyond sorrow."

The great innovation, the marvel, was that a few years later, his spirit was recognized as having passed into the body of another monk who then became high-priest of Drepung in succession to Lotus Thunderbolt. This miracle was something absolutely new in the Buddhist world. Here was a soul entitled to the bliss of Buddhahood but who chose to be

reborn and come back on earth to help his fellow sentient-beings. He was a Living Buddha, the first of his kind.

The third high-priest converted to Buddhism a certain number of Mongol princes and, in exchange, received from them the title of Dalai Lama or All Embracing Lama, Dalai meaning also 'as vast as the ocean'. He, therefore, became the Third Dalai Lama.

Until now, the High-Priest of Drepung was nothing more than an important religious figure and the acknowledged head of the gelukpas. The great temporal power in Tibet still belonged to the King of Tsang, the Red Hat pope of Sakya and head of the dukpas.

The fifth Dalai Lama, Lobzang the Eloquent, was a very forceful personality. Not only did he want to establish the religious supremacy of the gelukpas over Tibet, he also wanted to deprive the dukpas of all political power.

When marauding Tartars from Mongolia and Turkestan invaded northern Tibet and threatened the tottering power of the Sakya pontiff, Lobzang saw the opportunity and seized it with his teeth. He concluded an alliance with the most powerful Tartar prince, Gushi Khan, who crushed the army of Tsang and destroyed the power of the Red Hats. Gushi Khan and his successors became military commanders of Lhasa with the title of "King" but political power was entirely vested in the hands of the Dalai Lama.

Lobzang the Eloquent, who was an extraordinary mixture of a subtle diplomat, a ruthless warrior and an inspired lama, established the most amazing political power on earth. He and his successors filled the triple role of god, priest and king. Not only did they have power of life and death over their subjects, they held sway over their future lives and reincarnations and could keep them chained to the Wheel of

Existence for as long as they wished. It was the most terrifying power a ruler has ever exercised over other human beings.

The Fifth Dalai Lama proclaimed that he was a reincarnation of King "Straight-Strong-Deep", who was himself an emanation of god Chen-Re-Zi or Lord of Mercy, the god-protector of Tibet. He forcibly converted most Red Hat lamas and made gelukpas out of them, using very un-Buddhistic methods of wholesale slaughter and bloody massacres in the process. Thanks to his ruthless methods, nine-tenths of the Tibetan lamas today belong to the Yellow Hat sect. The Red Hats' power took refuge in the forests and mountains of Bhutan; the King-Priest of this Himalayan state, the Dharma Raja, became the spiritual head of the dukpas.

It was during the Great Fifth's reign that the first white man penetrated into Tibet and reached Lhasa—Father Grueber, an Austrian Jesuit who described this Tibetan Torquemada as "this devilish God-The-Father who puts to death such as refuse to adore him."

Lobzang made the long journey to Peking and met the Chinese emperor who came down from the Dragon Throne and met him as if he were a ruling sovereign of equal rank. Just as Emperor Charlemagne and the Roman Pope considered themselves as equal in rank and had divided temporal and spiritual power between them, the emperor considered the Dalai Lama as head of the Faith. He gave him a gold tablet on which his official title was inscribed:

MOST EXCELLENT, SELF-EXISTING BUDDHA, UNIVERSAL RULER OF THE BUDDHIST FAITH, HOLDER OF THE SCEPTRE, DALAI LAMA.

The creation of Living Buddhas did not stop at the Dalai Lamas. Lobzang's old teacher, the "Banner of Religion's

Victory," was granted the title of Second Incarnate Lama or second Living Buddha and he was appointed abbot of Tashilumpo monastery. His new name was Panchen Rimpoche or Precious Great Sage and his successors became known all over the world as Panchen or Tashi Lamas. They were recognized as being the incarnation of Amitabha or Buddha of Boundless Light whose spiritual son, Lord Chen-Re-Zi, was incarnate in the Dalai Lama. This has prompted many Westerners to state, incorrectly, that the Panchen Lamas were spiritually above the Dalai Lamas.

After the creation of the Second Incarnate Lama, many Living Buddhas appeared in Tibet, western China and Mongolia, who waived the privilege of "passing beyond sorrow" and were willing to reincarnate themselves in this world. They became known and are known today as *trülkus* or phantom bodies. Usually deprived of all political power, they became the heads of most important monasteries, serving mainly as living deities to be worshipped.

The Great Fifth Dalai Lama, having thus set a new course to the history of Tibet, decided to retire and handed over the political power to his capable prime minister. He retired in the magnificent Potala Palace which he had built on the top of a small mountain near Lhasa and died in 1680. The prime minister, who was anxious to use the Great Fifth's prestige and power, concealed his death for nine years. This was not difficult, considering the tremendous size of the Potala and the ease with which the Dalai Lama could be concealed in it, living in complete seclusion. As it would be disrespectful for anyone to live higher up than the ruler, his apartments were and still are on the extreme top of the palace.

The prime minister finally had to admit that the Grand Lama was dead and, at the same time, announced that his

successor was a young man named Melodious Purity. The choice was unfortunate, Melodious Purity being already too old to be trained for the life of an ascetic ruler. He was acquainted with the pleasures of worldly life and his conduct shocked all Tibetans. He certainly beautified the rather severe Potala Palace, built a charming little temple to the serpent gods and wrote a great deal of poetry in which his personality was very frankly described. The gem is the short poem:

> I dwell apart in Potala
> A God on Earth am I;
> But in the town, the Prince of rogues
> and boisterous revelry.

Finally, a Mongol Prince transmitted to him an invitation from Emperor Kang-Hsi to go to Peking; he started immediately and died mysteriously on the way. In spite of his worldly attitude, his memory is still loved in Tibet and his debauches are assumed as having been put on to test the faith of his subjects.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, China came out of a period of anarchy consecutive to the end of the Ming Dynasty and new rulers appeared: the Manchus who established a strong dynasty in Peking and who lasted until the great Chinese revolution of 1911.

A new chapter was opening in the history of Tibet. Following the death of Melodious Purity, a period of disorder and uncertainty occurred. The belief in the reincarnation theory was shaken for a time and several candidates were put up for the Dalai Lama's throne. Taking advantage of these internal disorders, an army of Moslem Tartars swept

down from Dzungaria, and took Lhasa by storm, wrecking and looting monasteries and temples.

Strangely enough, history records that they stopped in 1717 at Samding monastery which they intended to occupy. The Tartar general sent a sarcastic message to the abbess, Thunderbolt Sow, promising not to loot the lamasery if he could see her change herself into a pig. In reply, she begged for mercy, asking him to turn back and leave them in peace. When, disregarding the abbess's plea, the Tartars broke into the monastery, there wasn't a single human being, but pigs were running round all over the place. Terrified and disgusted, the Tartars fled from Samding and never came back.

The Tibetans applied to Peking for help and Emperor Kang-Hsi sent up a strong army to drive out the ferocious invaders. The emperor re-established the succession by discovery but deprived the Dalai Lamas of temporal power. He appointed a regent with the title of "King" and took over the suzerainty of Tibet. His political power was represented in Lhasa by two Chinese mandarins or *ambans* who were all-powerful.

Tibet thus became a Chinese protectorate. But it was a very difficult and troublesome country to rule and anti-Chinese feeling swiftly increased among all Tibetans. Several Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries had found their way to Lhasa in the middle of the eighteenth century and to them, mainly, we owe a precise account of this tug-of-war between Chinese and Tibetans.

The Eighth Dalai Lama, having made an attempt at seizing political control of the country, was thrown into jail by the ambans. Then they murdered the king-regent and started ruling the country directly. Finally, outraged, the people of Lhasa massacred the ambans and the entire Chinese garrison.

To wipe out this loss of face, Emperor Chien-Lung reoccupied Tibet and sent back two tough ambans who now took over the job of appointing the king-regent. As they could hardly control the selection of the Dalai Lamas, they adopted the safer course of poisoning them regularly as soon as they came of age, thus perpetuating a convenient and docile regency. The Ninth Dalai Lama was poisoned when eleven years of age, the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth when they reached eighteen, their legal majority.

But the course of events in the nineteenth century saw the gradual decline of the Manchu power and the approaching decline of the Chinese civilization and empire. Brought into a too abrupt contact with the despised Western world, Chinese mandarins were unable to adjust their military and political views to a changing world. Their policy in Tibet was very simple—keep Lhasa under their subtle control and keep all foreigners out of the country. It was the Chinese and not the Tibetans who initiated this policy of "Forbidden Country" and though the Tibetans adopted it later on for different purposes, it started mainly as a Chinese manœuvre to keep the Roof of the World under their thumb.

Power, in those days, was not as centralized as it became later on—whether it was the power of Lhasa over the Tibetan districts or the power of Peking over the Chinese provinces and autonomous states. Between Tibet and China, in the impenetrable jungles of western Szechwan and northern Yunnan or the inaccessible mountains of the Tibetan province of Kham, a great many small independent kingdoms and tribes led their own lives without regard for either Peking or Lhasa. Bad communications and the non-participation of China in the Western industrial revolution which was already transforming India, gradually weakened the

political power of Peking and loosened its hold on the various parts of its huge empire.

This heterogeneous Chinese empire was really united by a common civilization and the extraordinarily democratic institution of mandarins recruited, not by birth, but through intellectual competition. The alleged intellectual superiority of the mandarins allowed Peking to rule, from a distance, the five great races into which they had divided the empire: the Mongols, (Mêng), the Moslem Turkis, (Hui), the ruling Manchus, (Man), the Chinese (Han) and the Tibetans (Tsang). Nevertheless, two of those groups were beginning to manifest autonomist inclinations and were increasingly attracted by their more powerful neighbours: the Mongols who were irresistibly drawn towards Russia and the Tibetans. But the Tibetans, though they received a few political ideas from British India, were keeping their country hermetically sealed to foreign travellers. It is only in the growing power of a Tibetan National Party that the new idea of independent nation as opposed to empire-civilization, manifested itself on the Roof of the World.

When, in 1894, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama reached the fateful age of eighteen, the National group in Lhasa staged a dramatic revolt. Aware of what would happen if the Chinese were left free to poison their future ruler, they stole the great Seals of Office from the King-Regent whom they imprisoned in a lamasery. With the help of the nationalists and the possession of the Seals, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama assumed absolute political power over the strong protests of the Chinese ambans. The Tibetans were eventually able to bribe one of the ambans who tore up a strong edict sent from Peking, condemning the *coup d'état*. The amban, nevertheless, kept on dispatching to the Manchu emperor

reports leading him to believe that Tibet was still under his authority.

The following year, in 1895, China was disastrously defeated by Japan. The crushing of the Boxer Rebellion by Western armies in 1900 added to China's loss of face. The Dalai Lama, now, openly flouted Chinese authority and the contempt of the Tibetans for their overlords knew no bounds.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama gave early signs of being a very serious and hard-working ruler. The son of a poor peasant, he had been brought up by monks, as was the custom, and his childhood had been lonely. Deeply imbued with religious and philosophical knowledge, he was miserably unaware of the outside world and of its politics.

His first independent action was to tighten up the slack discipline of the Lamaist clergy; this he did by summoning the abbots of the large monasteries around Lhasa and severely admonishing them.

Every year, during the Great Prayer festival, the entire police and administration of Lhasa are entrusted for a week to the great lamaseries of the neighbourhood. In time, this week had become an ordeal for the entire population as the monks usually ran amok when let loose. Looting, raping, confiscation and destruction had become such well-established features of the festival that the lay population fled Lhasa during the New Year celebrations, except, of course, those who had neither wealth nor virtue to lose.

The Dalai Lama, having summoned the abbots, asked them by whose authority they behaved in this way:

"By the authority of the great Fifth Dalai Lama," they answered.

"And who is the great Fifth Dalai Lama?" asked the ruler.

Surprised and then subdued, they replied:
"Without doubt, your Holiness is."
And that was the end of the argument.

When the twentieth century dawned, the political authority of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama became so firmly established that Chinese suzerainty was reduced to mere pretence.

But a new threat with which the Dalai Lama could not cope was looming in the south, beyond the Himalayas. The British in India had been driven, in order to protect their empire, to wage a great many small preventive wars on the outskirts of the subcontinent. They had already annexed the Kalimpong and Darjeeling districts, established a protectorate over Sikkim state and a semi-protectorate over Bhutan. All these states were Buddhist countries, formerly part of Tibet.

Meanwhile, the British viceroys were keen to know more about this mysterious Roof of the World and its inhabitants. Several secret explorations were made in Tibet by Indian agents and one of them, Sarat Chandra Das, was discovered by the Tibetans, a discovery which greatly alarmed Lhasa.

This alarm was played on by the Chinese who wanted to keep the British out at all costs. Peking warned the Tibetans that the British intended to invade their country and destroy their religion. In point of fact, the British wanted to make sure that Tibet would not become a base for a power hostile to India. They also wanted to conclude a trade agreement with Lhasa. Several letters sent by Lord Curzon, the viceroy, were returned to Calcutta, unopened.

The Dalai Lama, who had, by now, become a very good and experienced administrator at the age of twenty-six, knew nothing about foreign affairs. This dangerous ignorance finally brought him to the brink of disaster. He had become

very friendly with a Russian *Buriat* named Dorjieff, who had studied in the Rice Heap monastery and who was a convinced Buddhist. He also happened to be an agent of the white czar in St. Petersburg. Persuading the Dalai Lama that Russia was the most powerful nation on earth, he stated that an increasingly large number of Russians were being converted to Buddhism and that the Russian empire would, therefore, be a natural ally of Tibet. On their part, Tibetans always thought of Russia as an extension of Mongolia and therefore as a suitable field for Buddhist proselytism.

If anything could have excited the fears of the British, this growing Russian influence was it. That, and the definite refusal of Lhasa to negotiate with India finally prompted the British to send a small army up to the Roof of the World and settle the matter once and for all.

In October 1903, the Water-Hare year of the Tibetan calendar, the viceroy of India nominated Colonel Younghusband as chief of the British-Indian expedition into Tibet, with an armed escort under General Macdonald. On the twelfth of December 1903, the British-Indian army of four thousand men crossed the Jelep-La Pass without opposition and streamed down into the Chumbi Valley.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama was facing his first great trial. To his great knowledge in matters of religion, philosophy and internal administration of Tibet, he was going to add now a thorough grasp of foreign affairs and power politics; those notions, he would learn through his forthcoming bitter experiences.

A new chapter in the history of the Roof of the World was opening and the spell of Tibet's mysterious isolation was broken for a time.

CHAPTER IX

THE TSANG PO AND ONWARD

THE SUN WAS slowly setting beyond the distant fortress of Palte and the waters of the Turquoise Lake were darkening. A cool breeze raised waves among the poppies and blue myrtle carpeting the land beyond the beach.

We were on our way again and parted with the other caravan at a crossroads. The Tibetan trader was going straight up to the Nyapso Pass, using a short-cut. We were moving more slowly and headed for the village of Tramalung on the northern shore of the lake.

Flocks of sheep and goats were grazing on the mountain-sides and wild yaks occasionally ambled across our road. As we approached Tramalung, the Valley of Peas, barley fields appeared on both sides of our track and when we had reached the village at last, the sun had completely disappeared. In the twilight, the Yamdrok assumed the appearance of a gigantic scorpion awakening with the help of icy gushes of wind. Masses of dark grey clouds gathered around the mountain-tops, threatening to split wide open any minute, and we had just time to rush into our farmhouse and seek shelter before the storm broke loose. Lashed by the fierce wind the lake's waves glittered like a million jewels surrounding the tiny village of Tramalung and its half a dozen trembling lights.

The Khamba-La Pass towers two thousand feet above Tramalung and we started our ascent as soon as we had left the main street. Winding my way up on the spiralling and twisting causeway, I admired the increasingly magnificent

view of the Turquoise Lake sprawling down below. Last night it had looked like an awakening scorpion slowly stretching its limbs. At sunrise, the scorpion was asleep once more, a perfect mirror artistically but oddly shaped. The sun was slowly rising behind the bleak mountains of the Samding promontory on the opposite shore, gradually melting the mist of early morning. The sky was cloudless, the air was as pure as could be and, except for the plodding of my small caravan, a majestic silence reigned over this fairyland.

Shivering and gasping for air at 17,000 feet we stood at last on the Khamba La. This rounded saddled pass is the gateway to central Tibet and from there we had, for a brief instant, one of the most magnificent views in the world. Two thousand feet below and behind us, in the centre of a web of converging valleys, the huge bluish waters of the Yamdrok Lake spread out as far as the horizon towards east and west. On the other side of the pass and ahead of us, five thousand feet below, a large gleaming streak of silvery water twisted its way along the centre of a broad valley. The expansive Tsang Po River, the lifeline of Tibet which springs out of Kashmir, crosses Tibet on a fifteen-hundred-mile course at an altitude of 12,000 feet then falls down through the jungles of northern Assam, reappears in India as the Bramaputra River and eventually merges with the sacred Ganges. On the horizon, far away beyond the Tsang Po, innumerable jagged snow-capped peaks mark the beginning of the unexplored Chang Tang highlands. Thanks to the rarefied atmosphere and our almost perfect vision, this was a landscape of truly prodigious dimensions, as awe-inspiring as a Switzerland on a gigantic scale.

A thin veil of misty clouds soon blurred this magnificent vision and engulfed the Khamba La. We started coiling our

way downward. As usual, I dismounted and walked ahead of the caravan, eager to reach the broad and warm valley of the Tsang Po, also mindful of the Tibetan proverb: "A horse is no horse if it cannot carry its rider up to the pass; a man is no man if he cannot walk down."

We were now in Central Tibet, as far away as possible from industrial civilization and motorized transport, coming closer to the last country in the world where a different but real civilization is still alive. The path was so steep that four miles took us down four thousand feet and the steepness increased with the decreasing altitude. The landscape took a strong resemblance to some Colorado canyons, unfathomable chasms on the edge of which our path ran precariously. No trees, no cultivated fields, were in sight in this bleak and hard area. Further down, however, the first irrigation canals appeared alongside the path, regulating a large flow of life-giving water rushing towards the populated cities of the valley. I was amazed at such colossal labour, at this network of canals running for miles in a complete desert and built centuries ago without any mechanized help. Though the Central Tibetans do not depend entirely on irrigation, the rainfall is so small and uncertain that these canals represent a vital necessity.

When I finally reached the bottom of the valley, I sat down and waited for my slow-moving cavalcade to catch up. It was about noon and, at 12,000 feet only, the temperature was up in the eighties. A few hours before, on the Khamba-La Pass, it was far below the freezing point. I started peeling off windproof jackets, pullovers and scarfs, made a bundle of them and handed it to Chumpa as soon as the caravan had arrived.

We ambled through the village of Partsi and, as usual, everyone was outdoors to watch the *peling*. The streets

were well paved, and lizards roamed between the stones. Poplars and willow trees surrounded every house and garden. Prosperity and contentment were stamped on the faces of the small crowd and on this neat-looking village. For miles, we followed the course of the majestic Tsang Po, four or five hundred feet wide at that time of the year. Huge sand dunes soon spread out across our eastward course and, in time, we found ourselves in the centre of a large desert of white gleaming sand. What with the damp heat, the dunes and the barren aspect of the rocky cliffs, I could easily imagine that I was back in Arabia, on the shores of the Persian Gulf.

North of this desert, a rocky spur ran into the river and blocked the view of the rest of the valley. A short ascent on a stony path over the spur and we came down on the beach of Chaksam. This is where we had to stop and take the ferry across the Tsang Po. A few hundred feet down the river, the glittering yellow roofs of the Chaksam lamasery were hanging on the steep mountain-sides and towered over the flowing water.

The sound of rhythmic chanting made me turn round. Splashing its way across the Tsang Po, and about to land on the beach, the strange-looking ferry was carrying a load of bellowing yaks and laughing men. This long flat-bottomed quadrangular barge was made of walnut planks and looked like a giant candy box. Three pairs of oars were manned by teams of men and women singing at the top of their lungs some gay tunes of Central Tibet. Just then, the oars were pulled back into the barge and the ferry struck the bottom of the shallow waters some thirty feet from the beach. A rope was uncoiled and thrown over to a group of men standing on the sand. Pulling and tugging, they tried vainly to drag the barge closer to the dry sand and finally gave up. A wooden door was thrown open on the ferry's side; the animals jumped

heavily into the water and splashed their way towards the beach. The human cargo was carried on the shoulders of sturdy boatmen and landed on the sand without having been dampened by a drop of water.

I watched these proceedings with a certain apprehension. I did not intend to have my equipment dipped into the muddy water and my paraphernalia ruined. For ten rupees, the boatmen had another try at dragging the barge closer to the beach and we gained a few feet. Preceded by the equipment, I rode into the water, jumped into the ferry and pulled up my pony into this new version of Noah's Ark.

We left the beach and the singing boatmen started rowing, tearing us away from the sand. Beyond the rocky spur, the entire ferry and its heavy cargo were caught in powerful whirlpools; we were sent spinning and swinging round, carried away by the swirling current. Straining their rope-like muscles, the boatmen rowed diagonally against the current and eventually bumped the barge against the sand dunes of the northern shore.

The disembarkation was proceeding smoothly and most of the equipment had already reached the beach when suddenly Chumpa's old father slipped and fell into the water. While his fur hat went floating down the river, the boatmen roared with laughter and made no move to rescue the poor man splashing hopelessly in the shallow water. Chumpa finally managed to collect the soaking remains and drag his father up to the beach.

For an hour, we trudged downstream towards the east, along the north bank of the Tsang Po, across a fertile and wooded country, through villages that have scarcely changed during the past eight or nine centuries. A few miles north of the fertile plain, a granite cliff throws a gigantic spur into the river, as if to prevent us from going any further. However, a

narrow rocky causeway has been carved out of the granite. We spiralled our way cautiously, overcoming huge boulders and fallen rocks, along twisting stairs and shaky steps. Below and sometimes under us, swirling masses of foaming water tried to tear down our path and the entire cliff as well.

This wonderful defence of nature protects the valley into which we soon emerged: the Kyi Chu, the valley of Lhasa and the most populated part of Tibet. We turned at right angles to the north and left the Tsang Po altogether.

The village of Chusul in which we now found ourselves consists of a few houses surrounded by poplars and a few green fields enclosed by irrigation ditches. I was put up in the country house of one of Lhasa's great personalities—Tsarong Shape, an ex-favourite of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and one of the most influential men in Tibet. In my gay Chinese room I was surprised to see a great many geographical maps on the walls. Later on, in Lhasa, Tsarong Shape told me that he was the only Tibetan member of the National Geographic Society and a regular subscriber to its magazine.

Once more, I found myself riding in a warm desert of sand dunes, blown up the Kyi Chu Valley by gales lashing for thousands of years the banks of the Tsang Po. The entire valley and surrounding hills were covered with this yellow powder and there were no traces of culture or vegetation in this desert. Hours passed by; again, and with monotonous regularity, rocky cliffs interrupted our ride and closed in on the broad river like huge gates of coarse granite. We scrambled along the same stony causeways and staircases until we reached a wide opening and a flattish valley carpeted with green fields. The Kyi Chu turned towards the east and just at the bend the small village of Nethang, or Smooth Meadow,

nestled under the protection of a vast lamasery. This was our last halt before the Forbidden City.

The great morning had arrived at last. It was three weeks since I had left India and my boundless impatience to reach the Forbidden City woke me up earlier than usual. I could hardly believe that this was the end of the long journey and that I was going to reach at last the goal of my efforts—the mysterious capital of the Buddhist world which so few foreigners have been privileged to see.

This last lap of my travels was perhaps the most exciting and exhilarating. Here, at last, I was in the holy of holies, in the populated centre of Tibet where a civilization completely alien to our own has, to this day, resisted all external influence. In this valley, I could see the last representatives of a forgotten world, happier and more prosperous than any Asiatics I had seen during my previous travels.

The broad plain of Lhasa was surrounded on all sides by several rows of aquiline mountains, bluish masses of translucid rocks in the early morning. A background of snow-capped peaks on the far horizon emphasized the happy seclusion of this heavenly plain. Green fields and small groves were spread out on both sides of the wide and majestic Kyi River. We met a large number of traders and mulemen, of wide-eyed villagers who stopped working in their fields to look at me, of silk-clad aristocrats travelling with their singing lute players, of purple-robed lamas twirling their prayer wheels and of dignified peak-capped officials. More than ever, I was an object of intense curiosity, a visitor from another world, a traveller from the moon.

Hanging on the mountain-sides, an amazing number of golden-roofed temples studded the entire valley like so many jewels glittering under the bright sun. Carved out of the

rocky cliffs on which the swirling waters of the Kyi Chu spread their foam, huge painted frescoes of the Buddha of Boundless Light, the four-handed Padma Sambhava and many deities seemed to warn the foreign traveller that he was going to enter the most mysterious city in the world, an earthly foretaste of endless nirvana.

On a large rocky spur thrown out into the middle of the river, a gigantic figure of a seated Buddha was carved out of the granite, looking with supreme serenity towards the Forbidden City. A cairn decorated with prayer flags stood on this "Ridge of Reverential Prostration" and everyone dismounted. To my great surprise, Chumpa and every member of my caravan were seized with a powerful emotion and, throwing themselves on the ground, remained prostrated for several minutes. It was here, from this sacred ridge, that I had my first breath-taking view of the gigantic palace of the Dalai Lama on the Potala hill. What looked like myriads of gold roofs sparkled on the top of the palace and its multitude of buildings and pagodas. Slightly to the left, another hill supported the Chakpori temple, the most important College of Medicine in Tibet. So often had I looked and marvelled at the pictures of these two famed sights that I felt as if I had seen them all my life, as if I was, at last, coming home.

The valley widened considerably and a placid sea of green fields slightly undulating under a cool breeze spread out between us and the Potala. The Forbidden City concealed itself beyond the tremendous bulk of the two hills and behind the rocky wall which joins them across the plain. Only now did Chumpa tell me that I would not see Lhasa today as our destination lay on this side of the hills.

Our path had become a broad and respectable road. At one bend of the highway, concealed in the shadow of towering elms, a small group of red-coated Sikkimese stood, their

hands on their horses' bridles. As we came closer, I recognized a white man among them. It was Hugh Richardson, I.C.S. Chief of the British-Indian Mission in Lhasa, who had come out a few miles to greet us. As neatly dressed as if he was out riding in London's Hyde Park, he struck his boots impatiently until he caught sight of us. I dismounted and he came up smiling. We shook hands warmly, exchanged news of my trip and the situation in Lhasa, and started towards the mission. Richardson, a lonely bachelor who is fanatically devoted to Tibet, pointed to the left and said:

"This is worth looking at, for the first time."

I could not repress a cry of admiration at the sight of the Rice Heap, the largest monastery in the world. Housing more than ten thousand monks, this colossal lamasery of Drepung occupies the entire width of an ascending valley and sends its multitudes of golden-roofed temples, colleges assembly halls and rows of cells climbing the bluish mountain flanks in a gigantic mass of dazzling whiteness. Thousands of dark windows speckled this accumulation of whitewashed walls and crowds of lamas were bustling about like swarms of ants.

Between us and Drepung, a small thicket of wood enclosed a separate cluster of temples and colleges. That, I was informed, was the seat of the State Oracle of Tibet, one of the most important gentlemen whose task it is to connect the government with the occult world.

As we came closer to Lhasa, the tremendous bulk of the Potala palace loomed larger than ever. I mentally compared its size with that of the great palaces of the world and came to the conclusion that Spain's Escorial or England's Windsor are small shacks compared with the stupendous Vatican of the Buddhist world.

The countryside became a vast ocean of green meadows

interspersed with marshes and ponds on which floated lotus, shrieking wild ducks and croaking frogs. A great many attractive villas surrounded by gardens and dense groves stood on both sides of the road. Crowds passed by us: purple- and yellow-robed lamas and abbots crowned with small gold-plated pagodas, silk-clad officials with their red-fringed circular hats and crimson tassels. Richardson smiled and bowed ceremoniously each time we passed someone whom he knew personally, explaining to me the rank and function of each.

We reached journey's end at last: the beautiful garden of Dekyi Lingka in the centre of a dense wood. Surrounded by poplars and walnuts and overlooking the garden stood a small pavilion and a few adjoining buildings. This was the residence of the British-Indian Mission, a residence which is rented by the abbot of Kundeling monastery to the government of India.

My room was on the ground floor, overlooking the busy courtyard, and I fell down in the armchair. I pinched myself —I could not believe that this incredible journey was over, that I was in Lhasa at last. When, later on in the evening, I found myself in the living room, reading a month-old copy of the London *Times*, listening to a broadcast from Calcutta and sipping a gin and lime, I was once more struck by the idea that it was all a joke, that my journey across the Himalayas had been a dream and that I could not possibly be in the Forbidden City. But as the sun was setting beyond Drepung in its purple splendour and I stepped out into the garden, the wistful sound of conch shells and the blasts of ragdongs dragged me back to reality. I was in forbidden Lhasa all right.

CHAPTER X

AUDIENCE OF THE DALAI LAMA

"MAY I INTRODUCE George Tsarong?" said Hugh Richardson.

In the centre of Dekyi Lingka's English-style living-room stood a young lanky Tibetan in a flowing robe of violet silk brocade, a dangling turquoise mounted on gold and surrounded with pearls hanging from his left ear and a strange yellow hat perched on the top of his head like a bell-boy's headgear. His pockmarked face was pleasant although his eyes always seemed to betray a certain anxiety. He moved with graceful ease and spoke perfect English with a slight Indian intonation. George, whose full name is Tsarong Se Dabul Namgyal, is the son of the very famous Tsarong Shape. He has been brought up in a special school for young Tibetans which the shrewd British set up in Darjeeling many years ago, so as to increase their influence over the Roof of the World.

George had been appointed by the Tibetan government to act as my official interpreter in Lhasa. His first task was to explain in great detail what I was obliged to do, what I could do if I wanted to and what I definitely could not do.

I was not allowed out of Dekyi Lingka before I had been to the public audience of the Dalai Lama. An astrologer had decided that my audience would have to take place two days after my arrival, at 9 a.m.—an auspicious day and hour.

"It is an old custom," George smiled apologetically. How many times was I going to hear this stock phrase whenever I

asked an unanswerable question! After the audience, the ruler would bless me and I would then be free to go anywhere and see anyone—but not, however, before having complied with the old custom of calling on the regent, the *Kashag* or Council of Ministers, the Monks' Cabinet, the Dzepöns and many more. Each call made on the official bodies as a group would have to be followed by separate calls to the private homes of each of the dignitaries of state. Fortunately, these calls would be restricted to officials of the third and fourth rank. Then I was invited to parties of all kinds so as to meet all the prominent citizens of Lhasa, which would be followed by more calls on the diplomatic representatives of Nepal, Ladak and China, the Dalai Lama's birthday celebrations and numerous farewell parties. I was breathless at the end of this staggering list.

We then broached the subject of my presents. George looked them over doubtfully, suggested various changes and switches which Chumpa carried out.

"You should not smoke in public," George said, puffing on his cigarette. "It is against the instructions of Tsong Kapa and against the government's wishes."

Little by little, we straightened out every problem or uncertainty.

"Be ready at 7.30 the morning after tomorrow. We will start at eight for the audience at the Jewel Park."

It was a beautiful morning and it certainly looked auspicious. George arrived late at 8 a.m. and we left right away, followed by Chumpa and two servants carrying my very modest gifts. We trotted briskly on a large dusty road separating the two dense woods of Dekyi Lingka and the extensive Jewel Park; our cavalcade halted shortly afterwards in front of the large golden gate of the Dalai Lama's residence.

A small platoon of khaki-clad Tibetan soldiers presented arms. We dismounted and I took off my hat politely whereas George took no notice of them and walked straight into Norbhu Lingka. Trying my best to look dignified, I followed him along a wide paved alley lined with a large multi-coloured variety of trees gathered in dense thickets of oaks, poplars, walnuts, and willow trees. On our right and through the woods, a small silvery lake, covered with lotus flowers and slightly rippled by white swans sailing majestically, shimmered under the bright sun. A small island surrounded by the calm water carried a delicate Chinese pagoda connected with the mainland by a yellow marble bridge.

Ahead of us, throngs of cherry-coloured monks of the household ambled slowly along the alley, watching me with great curiosity and whispering amongst themselves. There was an air of hushed expectancy about Norbhu Lingka; it was as if the Holy Presence of the God-King made it imperative not to raise one's voice.

A small group of yellow- and purple-robed lamas, the Peak Secretaries of the Ruler's Court, were apparently waiting for us, twiddling the beads of their rosaries. George salaamed the First Chamberlain of the Court and I imitated him. Without a word, we walked on towards the far end of the alley where the Audience Hall stood in all its majestic splendour, with its golden dome and shingles, dark woollen curtains covered with *Kyilkhors* or magic diagrams and green leering dragons. Hundreds of monks and worshippers forgathered in front of the closed doors, squatting on the pebbled ground or wandering about aimlessly, waiting for the audience to start.

I spent the rest of the time waiting in the chamberlain's reception room, talking to our host about the weather and

my journey. The Peak Secretary looked at me and said, laughing:

"You do not believe in religion, do you?"

I hardly knew how to reply to this thrust out of a blue sky and I replied cautiously. Then followed the first of many conversations in which theology, politics and economics were intermingled as they always are in Tibet.

The sound of a loud gong interrupted us, unfortunately. Nine o'clock had just been struck and we rose in a hurry. I made sure that my silken *khata* was at hand and that Chumpa followed with the presents.

The sounds of a beating of drums and gongs started, spreading a strange musical rhythm through the gardens of Norbhu Lingka. All the lamas and worshippers had gathered and lined up, forming a long crimson ribbon through the courtyard. The Peak Secretary thrust me into the queue with his last recommendations as to my behaviour and very soon the huge carved doors started rolling on their brass hinges, opening with a fracas. The beating of the drums was louder now but though it seemed to fill the dark inside of the Audience Hall which was disclosed by the opening of the doors, the sound came from elsewhere. Cohorts of gigantic monks of the Dalai Lama's bodyguard took their positions near the entrance and started regulating, very roughly, the traffic of pilgrims and worshippers. These seven-feet-tall Khamba lamas are recruited in eastern Tibet, in the province of Kham where men are larger than anywhere else in Asia.

The long queue of worshippers started flowing inwards and I soon found myself inside the Audience Hall, inside the holy of holies. Following the Peak Secretary's instructions, I kept my hat on. I saw little in the beginning until my eyes, dazzled by the sun, became accustomed to the gloom of this vast hall. Thin rays of light fell from the roof through

coloured windows, lighting up a polished floor of pebbles and mortar shining like marble. Giant Khamba bodyguards armed with whips and truncheons lined the walls like so many bronze statues, rendered more impressive still by their large padded shoulders.

In the depths of the hall, an imposing throne leaned against a wall decorated with beautiful *thankas*. On this altar, a yellow silk sheet spread out on his knees, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, incarnation of god Chen-Re-Zi and Ruler of Tibet, sat Buddha-wise. Known as the highest Living Buddha, the Inmost One, the God-King, the Precious Protector and countless other poetic names, the fourteen-year-old Chinese boy wore the usual garments of a lama and Tsong Kapa's tall pointed cap very similar to a bishop's headgear placed sideways, with yellow silk flaps falling on to his shoulders. For four hundred years through his previous thirteen incarnations, the self-perpetuating Dalai Lama sat on this same throne, blessing Gotama's followers and ruling the Roof of the World.

Trembling pilgrims slowly walked past the throne, offered their *khaya* and, awe-struck, bowed deeply under the ruler's benediction which the Dalai Lama dispensed with his holy sceptre. The worshippers then turned to their left and bowed in front of the lower throne of the regent, placed beside the ruler's altar.

As soon as he caught sight of me, the Dalai Lama's serious and concentrated expression lit up. A smile flitted across his keen intelligent face. Distracted, he forgot to bless several disappointed worshippers. My presence interrupted what must have been a monotonous routine and the sight of a foreigner is always a treat for the young and lonely ruler. A small "tut tut" of annoyance from the regent brought his attention back to his duties.

When my turn arrived, I bowed and felt the slight touch of the Dalai Lama's hand on my head. He had laid aside his holy sceptre and conferred upon me the great honour of a direct blessing. On the open silk scarf lying in my outstretched hands, a monk placed a bread and butter offering. The Dalai Lama took it and handed it over to another lama. The same ceremony was repeated with a miniature chorten and an image of Buddha. I thought that this was all and was going to lay my scarf at the foot of the throne when a monk caught my arm impatiently and handed me the fourth article which I had forgotten. Highly amused, the Dalai Lama took the holy book, passed it on and tied a purple scarf around my neck.

My personal presents having been offered by Chumpa who was just behind me, I turned to the left and bowed in front of the regent. While the old lama smiled with condescension, I laid scarf and offerings at the foot of his throne and walked away.

All this had been accomplished in deep silence, the eyes of the crowd of worshippers and of the ruler's household fastened upon me. I was then motioned by the Peak Secretary to sit "like a lotus" on a large velvet cushion in the centre of the hall. Facing the throne of the Inmost One, I saw George walk towards the Dalai Lama and pull a wooden cup out of his sleeve. A steaming jug of buttered tea was brought in by two lamas and a few drops were poured into the cup. George sipped a little, placed the cup on the floor and proceeded to make a quadruple kowtow, i.e. he prostrated himself and knocked his forehead on the ground four times. He remained in the ritual attitude of prostration for a while and was then free to join me on the cushion while buttered tea was poured into my cup. I tortured my face to convey an impression of delectation while drinking this concoction in the presence and under the keen scrutiny of the two rulers of Tibet.

I had to bite my lips to make sure that I was not dreaming, that I was really sitting in the Audience Hall of the Dalai Lama of Tibet, that I was in this supremely forbidden and holy precinct. Watching the continuous flow of lamas and worshippers, listening to the sound, now very faint, of drums and gongs, I meditated that this spectacular ceremony alone was worth the trouble and hardships of the long journey. I looked at the aromatic clouds of sandalwood incense surrounding the Dalai Lama's throne as if to carry away on a magic cloud the God-King of Tibet.

No such wonder happened and the audience ended far more prosaically. One of the bronze giants of the bodyguard suddenly struck a gong and uttered a few words in a stentorian voice.

"We are told to get out," George translated in a whisper. Everyone rose hastily, bowed towards the throne of the God-King and, still facing the throne of the Inmost One, withdrew. In just a few minutes the hall was empty and we were among the last to leave. This unforgettable audience was over.

After a quick lunch at Dekyi Lingka, we went back to the Jewel Park: I had to pay my respects to the old regent privately. Regents, who rule Tibet during the minorities of the Dalai Lamas, are traditionally chosen among the Living Buddhas who head the four royal monasteries of Lhasa: Kundeling, Tsomoling, Tengyeling and Chomoling, and only occasionally among the Living Buddhas of faraway lamaseries such as Reting.

Taktra Yondzin Rimpoche, the most powerful man in Tibet, was seated Buddha-wise on a small gilded throne in his private apartment. Two long rows of crimson cushions accommodate his occasional visitors. I walked up to the regent and laid my scarf upon his knees. My presents were handed by Chumpa to a respectful servant and I sat down. The regent

inquired about my health and the journey. He then asked about my opinion of Tibet. Carefully instructed beforehand on what to say and what not to say, I replied cautiously.

Deep silence ensued—a silence so prolonged that I was becoming embarrassed and uneasy. Had I forgotten to say something or had I done the wrong thing? The elderly Rimpoche's heavily wrinkled and impassive face looked quite formidable. His resemblance to an Indian chief of Arizona or Wyoming was quite amazing. A few questions on my part met with no answer except for a very faint smile on his face. After a good twenty minutes of deep, puzzling silence, the regent indicated that this fascinating and informative interview was over. I withdrew, thanking him profusely for having given me so much of his valuable time.

CHAPTER XI

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

BEFORE LEAVING FOR the forthcoming audience-interview with the Kashag or Higher Cabinet, I was again carefully coached by George as to what to say and what not to say. Hoping to have better luck than with the dour and intimidating regent, I disregarded the instructions completely and did not fare any worse.

Our journey was far longer; instead of the few minutes needed to go to the nearby Jewel Park, we took almost an hour to reach the Cathedral where the interview was to take place. Our route ran through the large wall of rocks which stretches between the mountains of the Potala and the Chakpori. A large gate surmounted by a chorten, the Pargo Kaling, provides an opening in this powerful barrier, and as soon as we had passed through the archway, a breath-taking view of the Potala disclosed itself on my left. This Cyclopean palace, more than four hundred feet high and twelve hundred feet in length, towered above us, its gold roofs almōst invisible in the misty clouds of early morning. This gigantic building covering an entire mountain, with its numerous pavilions and separate wings, temples and cenotaphs, its thousands of windows, its powerful battlements and retaining walls springing out of the rock, conveys an amazing impression of beauty and harmony. The innumerable offices of this Oriental Vatican preside over the temporal administration of Tibet and the religious administration of a large part of the Buddhist world.

The central cluster of brown buildings detaches itself

from the dazzling whiteness of the rest: this is the Red Palace, the winter abode of the Dalai Lama whose private apartments are concealed on the extreme summit behind yellow walls.

Beyond the small village lying at the foot of the Potala and still enclosed within the palace's zigzagging battlements, lies the large plain of the Kyi Chu. Gardens and parks, woods and lakes spread out between us and the Forbidden City itself, the mysterious Lhasa, the Seat of the Gods, on the threshold of which I stood half an hour later.

Crowds were coming and going, and though they must have been accustomed to see the British chief of mission ride round their neighbourhood, it was obvious that my presence was a startling event. Tibetans stopped in their tracks when I entered the main street; they stood still, staring and gaping but without any trace of hostility in their eyes. In the bazaar, traffic came to a standstill and throngs of people opened up in front of our small party. We rode slowly and I took plenty of time to look with curiosity at this famed and mysterious city. There was little difference between these three- or four-storied houses, flat roofed, solidly built with whitewashed stone walls and those of Gyangtse, though everything in Lhasa seemed to be on a larger scale. There is no sign of sewage in the city; refuse and muckheaps littered the streets, seeming to generate spontaneously an incredible number of sick dogs.

Armies of toothless beggars grovelling in the dust were imploring the mercy of passing pilgrims. They were usually clad in shapeless rags, head shaved and for ever repeating at an accelerated pace the holy mantra: *Om! Mani Padme Hum!* until I felt positively compelled by some mysterious force to dole out a few *trangkas*. No wonder Lhasa is reputed to be a city of women, beggars and dogs!

We were in front of the Great Temple or Cathedral in no time. This holy shrine is the most famous in Tibet and it

is the goal of millions of Buddhist pilgrims in Mongolia, China and south-east Asia to whom it is as sacred as the Kaaba in Mecca is to Moslems. As in old medieval Europe, the Cathedral is surrounded and choked with narrow streets and houses almost leaning against its walls instead of standing in the centre of a large square where it could be admired in a suitable perspective. Built thirteen hundred years ago by King Straight-Strong-Deep, it grew with numerous additions made during the following centuries and is now so large that a part of it is used for government offices.

Walking in George's footsteps, I climbed a large creaking staircase up to the flat roof-top of the Great Temple. There, I found myself surrounded by small pagodas roofed with glittering sheets of solid gold! I turned away with reluctance and we walked towards the reception rooms of the government. I sat down on a purple cushion while George left to inform those concerned that we had arrived.

Guttural recitation of prayers and ringing of bells floated up from below. High mass was on in the Assembly Hall, evidently, but I dared not leave my seat to glance at the proceedings through the roof windows.

Suddenly, the floor began to shake and I heard the muffled sounds of numerous feet walking in my direction. A group of young silk-clad officials stumped into the reception room and lined up against the walls. They were followed by three dignitaries walking slowly and pompously while the other officials were respectfully bent in two with their tongues hanging out. The first dignitary was a monk, the Kalon Lama. He is the president of the Kashag and an old tradition prescribes that the president always be a lama. The other three members, the *shapes* or Lotus Feet of the Throne, are laymen and they have reached the highest position any layman could ever hope to attain in Tibet's theocracy. Only

two were actually present, the third *shape* being on a tour of inspection in Eastern Tibet.

Kashoe Shape, who walked in directly after the Kalon Lama, is a very fat and dignified middle-aged man. Young Surkhang Shape who came in last was all smiles and courtesy. I handed my silk scarf to the Kalon Lama who handed back another scarf which I gave to Kashoe Shape who gave me back his own which I then handed to Surkhang Shape, receiving his in exchange. This intricate ceremony was accomplished in deep silence, with self-conscious smiles on their faces. As soon as it was over, they walked towards a large lacquered table covered with Indian candies and cakes; all three of them sat down on a bench. I was invited to sit on the other side of the table and the audience started, carefully translated by George.

"Did you have a pleasant journey?" asked the Kalon Lama.

"A rather long and exhausting one," I replied. At George's translation, everyone laughed. A long silence followed, which I would have gladly broken if I had not been warned against this contingency beforehand. Finally, Surkhang started the ball rolling by asking me what the weather was like in India before I left.

I gradually switched the conversation to current affairs and politics. Each one of my questions was followed by a whispered conference between the three ministers, which always resulted in a noncommittal reply. It was obvious that I would get nowhere in my first interview. They would have to know me better and be questioned one by one separately before I could hope to have some interesting talks. It was striking to discover the extent to which Tibetans have adopted Chinese customs and manners, if perhaps with greater feeling for sincerity and truth. This hair-splitting and

shilly-shallying irritated me, as if they were afraid to entrust me with the slightest information about Tibet's position in Asiatic politics.

Buttered tea was sipped during the whole time and I was beginning to discover a pleasant flavour in this rather thick and nourishing liquid, much to the astonishment and delight of my Tibetan hosts. I had to pick out half a dozen hairs and a few flies swimming miserably in the buttered soup; this had to be done as discreetly as possible so as not to offend the dignified cabinet ministers.

From under our feet came the growing din of a religious service in progress in the dukhang. Our poorly-built floor trembled each time hundreds of guttural voices took up some psalmody after the music had recessed. The three members of the Kashag whispered amongst themselves again and rose as one body. In parting, the Kalon Lama told me that I was free to go anywhere or see anything provided I asked permission beforehand. We all bowed deeply and the Kashag departed solemnly, followed by the young officials and the servants.

As we were already on its roof, George suggested a visit to the Great Temple. I accepted eagerly and we floated about the large and mysterious cathedral, similar in many ways to the Palchor Choide Temple in Gyangtse but on a much larger scale. We were not allowed inside the Assembly Hall while the service was in progress but we went everywhere else. An army of giant multicoloured statues of wrathful demons lined the walls of innumerable chapels, thousands of candles and butter lamps burned continuously. Hundreds of pilgrims swished past us, completely immersed in their mystical thoughts and oblivious of everything else. Some went round the cathedral on their knees, others wore

heavy chains round their ankles. The main chapel was protected by a curtain of iron rings interlaced with each other. Behind it, at the far end of the holy of holies, I could see the gilded statue of Gotama Buddha studded with jewels and partly buried under a mass of uncut precious stones. Lamps and candle-sticks of solid gold burn continually, illuminating the resplendent and enigmatic image of the Perfect One.

For hours, while George lighted candles and kissed the feet of various goddesses, I ambled through the Great Temple, filling myself with the smell of rancid butter mixed with aromatic frankincense, with the sounds of bells, drums and cymbals, with the coloured shadows and lights, immersed in the strange atmosphere of this mysterious place, trying to fathom intuitively the depths of Tibetan thoughts and feelings. As I was to learn later on, this was a tall order and even then I felt as oppressed as if I were going to drown in some bottomless ocean.

On the walls of some deep subterranean vaults the horrifying paintings of the she-devil Lhamo (the goddess Kali of India), surrounded with swastikas, re-covered with the skins of human corpses and devouring the brains of a human skull were a remarkable achievement of Tibetan imagination and artistic inspiration. Amid the throngs of pilgrims, of spinning prayer wheels, of guttural mantras repeated at an increasing beat, choked and stifled by the acrid smell of rancid butter, by the ear-splitting sounds of gongs and drums, I finally became completely dizzy. As in the Palchor Choide Temple, I felt in need of laughter and sunshine to counteract the exceedingly powerful atmosphere of the Great Temple and I dragged a reluctant George who had not finished his devotions towards the curtained entrance.

Outside, the bright sunshine and the dusty wind made

me blink. We jumped on to our saddles and rode out through the heaving and bustling bazaar.

Pots of flowers decorated many window-sills and from protruding and multicoloured wooden beams hung cages with many singing birds. The motley crowd of the bazaar was made up of men from the far corners of Central Asia: turbaned Moslems from Kashmir and tarbooshed Turkis from Sinkiang, short and brisk Nepalese, shaven-headed Bhutanese, silk-gowned Chinese traders from Yunnan or Kansu, lanky Mongols and Buriats from Soviet Russia and Mongolia. The variety was just as great among the Tibetans themselves, between the giant Khambas and t[illegible], wild Mishmis and Abhors of the Assam frontier, [illegible] filthy Pharisians and the barbarian Goloks from Amdo, between Tibetans from Tsang and Tibetans from U.

"All roads lead to Lhasa" says a Tibetan proverb. The main street of Lhasa was a living demonstration of it. In this most forbidden city on earth, the last representatives of doomed civilizations meet as they met a thousand years ago and though the bazaar can sell anything now, from Singer sewing machines to cameras and Parker fountain pens, nothing has really changed. Here is still a living past, so alive and powerful in fact, that one doubts if time is anything more than a convenient symbol invented by modern man, that one even doubts if the outside world exists at all.

All the wealth and luxuries of Central Asia were spread out in the bazaar or jealously guarded in dingy shops: leopard, sable, lynx and bear skins; furs and multicoloured brocades and silks hanging from the ceiling, colourful cloths, rugs and carpets spread out on tables. Brass lamps and candle-sticks, shining bowls and jars were intermingled with delicately chiselled Tibetan furniture. In the food market, bricks of tea brought over from Tachienlu, the great tea

centre in western China, piled up in the streets. For the first time since I left India I saw baskets full of appetizing fruit: peaches, gooseberries and mulberries. Plenty of perfume and highly worked metal saddlery from Eastern Tibet, carpets from Gyangtse, spices, indigo, coral, pearls and brasswork from Nepal, porcelain and silk rugs from China, leather saddlery, coral and amber from Mongolia, sugar-balls, musk and rice from Sikkim, all these highly appreciated goods from the four corners of Asia were displayed for the benefit of wealthy Tibetans. But foreigners who came to exchange these goods could purchase and load their yaks with products for which [illegible] famed: wool and cloth, rugs, furs, drugs, musk, salt a[illegible]ver. Also amazing quantities of gold from the fabulous goldfields of Central Tibet most of which, reputed to be the richest in the world, have never been seen by the Westerners: Thok Jalung and Thok Daurakpa on the edge of the Chang Tang, Mani Serkha south-east of the Yamdrok Lake, near the sources of the Subansiri River. For religious reasons, nuggets of gold, though plentiful, are carefully left untouched and only gold dust is collected.

Business discussions are violent, and short-tempered customers often appeared ready to choke with rage. Men's pigtails flew in all directions as they argued back and forth. But as soon as their business deal was completed, jokes and laughter came into their own with the help of large glasses of *chang* at a nearby restaurant.

For all their arguments, these carefree men from distant frontiers seemed far happier than their colleagues in Shanghai or Calcutta. Most of them had travelled for months in caravans, fighting their way through wild areas against robber tribes and hostile climates, riding through countries which, as often as not, have never been seen by white men. Yet, this adventurous life appeals to them as it had appealed

to my companion of the Yamdrok Lake and the goal of these trials and tribulations, Lhasa, is like a seventh heaven to them.

And over all this bustling life and these colourful crowds, over this Oriental bazaar, over the entire Forbidden City, lie the colossal shadows of the Potala Palace, of the God-King of Tibet and the quest of absolute truth which the highest Living Buddha conducts on the Roof of the World.

CHAPTER XII

GOVERNMENT OF TIBET

FOLLOWED BY A large number of servants carrying my gifts (by dividing them up among many servants I was hoping to make a better impression), we walked, George and I, through a park of poplars and walnuts towards a small white house. A wooden veranda ran all round it and white curta[illegible]th blue designs protected the windows from the pow[illegible]s of the sun. This pavilion contains the reception rooms [illegible] the *dzepöns* or financial secretaries.

The four dzepöns, who work directly under the Kashag and control the layman's administration of Tibet, belong to the fourth rank of the civil service. One of the many legacies of Chinese rule is the custom, inherited from the mandarins of old, to indicate the rank of an official with the help of a precious stone inlaid with turquoises set on top of their head, around which their hair is curled. Dzepöns are entitled to wear an opaque blue button.

The financial secretaries were dressed in flowing robes of violet silk re-covered with purple coats. As usual, white cuffs fell from under their sleeves and hid their hands. On their jet-black hair neatly curled around their precious stone, a small yellow hat similar to George's headgear seemed incongruous on these dignified men.

I exchanged silken khatas with them as solemnly as with the Kashag and we sat down on modern chairs around a circular table. The senior member who conducted the interview was a tall, greying old man who possessed the best embryo of a beard I ever saw in Tibet: half a dozen silk

threads hanging from his chin. The other two members who were as tall as the senior dzepöns talked very little. The youngest but liveliest of all, Shakabpa Dzepon, was preparing himself to head a Tibetan mission to the Western world. He was, therefore, anxious to get as much information about conditions in America and Europe as he could.

The conversation followed the usual pattern at first. Polite inquiries about my journey and my health filled the first half hour. Then followed an unusual question:

"How old are you?" asked the senior dzepön.

Thoughtlessly, I replied, "Twenty-nine."

I bit my tongue as soon as these words had p[illegible] my lips. I saw the looks of dismay and consternation s[illegible] on their faces. Tibetans have the same feeling of veneration which the Chinese mandarins used to have for old age and the same contempt for youth. The government had made a bloomer in allowing me to come to Lhasa, their appalled expressions seemed to convey. I tried to patch things up somehow and asked George to explain that he had misunderstood me and the blunder was partly repaired when he told them that I was thirty-nine.

Having overcome this hurdle satisfactorily, I started asking questions about their work. Little by little, the picture of the government and administration of Tibet, the pattern of which is unique in the world, was made clear to me by the obliging dzepöns.

First and foremost comes the Dalai Lama, the God-King who is all powerful and exercises a complete dictatorship, controlling his subjects not only in this life but throughout their successive incarnations. He is the highest Living Buddha in existence, the omniscient incarnation of the God Protector of Tibet, willing to forgo the timeless bliss of

Nirvana to help his fellow sentient beings. Who would dare resist such power and such compassion?

Below him, if he is a minor, there may be a regent who acts in his name but with far less power or prestige. Though he is also a phantom body, the regent has to account for his actions to the Tibetan National Assembly.

Then comes the regular government of Tibet: the *Kashag* or Council of Ministers and, working under the Kashag, the four dzepöns who head the secular administration and the four Tungyik Chenpos who form the Monks' Cabinet at the head of the clerical administration. To these cabinets has been added a very recent creation: the Foreign Affairs Bureau, which is a separate office in charge of relations with the outside world. As I was able to observe, all official groups work as one. No difference of opinion between members of a cabinet is ever allowed to be made public and their decisions, result of perfect teamwork, are always unanimous.

Under them are the fifth, sixth and seventh classes of officials—governors of provinces, district magistrates, judges, chiefs of police, treasury officers, city mayors and inspectors of food, medicine, grass, wood and cattle. According to an old tradition, there are altogether 350 officials, though this number has considerably increased in recent years. The gradual extension of direct Tibetan administration in the eastern provinces and the growing power of the state have made it imperative to create new administrative posts or duplicate existing functions.

In times of minority of the ruler, one body seems to have a predominant influence: the Parliament or National Assembly. Housed in one of the large halls of the Great Temple in Lhasa, the National Assembly is made up of all the lay and ecclesiastical officials below the rank of *shape* who

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the problem of tightening its hold by setting up an intelligence service which supervises and reports on the activities of province governors and district commissioners. Furthermore, the government has decided recently that a radio network should be established, connecting all the large cities of Tibet. The first one was established in 1947 near Chamdo, the last Tibetan city before the border of the threatening Chinese in the east.

In theory and in practice under the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, every Tibetan was entitled to write and appeal directly to the ruler, overriding the entire administration. Complaints against landlords or local commissioners against judgments or tax collections were numerous and had become a heavy burden in the last years of the Inmost One. Part of this avalanche of complaints was due to the very drastic criminal code. Though death sentences were abolished years ago, Westerners would gladly exchange capital punishment for some of the standard chastisements required by Tibetan law: the pillory, the cangue, iron chains, hands chopped off above the wrist, noses sliced off and eyes gouged out. Even though the tough Tibetan does not suffer half as much as his Western counterpart, some of these sentences terrify prospective culprits who think twice before behaving unlawfully.

All in all, Tibet is a well ruled and well administered country. Compared with China's endemic chaos and lawlessness, Tibet is a true paradise. Murder is almost non-existent and theft is very rare. I travelled unarmed for months throughout the country and never saw any signs of criminality or banditry such as is common in India, Iran or the Middle East. Needless to add, this applies to Tibet proper and not to the outlying, badly known districts of [illegible] Tibet where the wild Goloks and barbarian Hsifan [illegible]

have their own and very special standards of honesty and lawfulness. As for the huge Chang Tang, in this arctic area, where no one ever wanders, no administration is needed.

The nobility of Tibet has large privileges. In their landed estates, Tibetan aristocrats still lead a feudal life comparable with that of the European Middle Ages, with large judicial powers over their tenants and hosts of servants. In exchange, they are compulsorily roped into the civil service and have to spend a large part of their lives as officials. Their salary is always small: one thousand dollars a year for a *shape*, the highest office in the government! The rest of their living expenses comes out of their private income. George Tsarong, for instance, complained to me more than once about this unpleasant conscription and the impossibility he found of satisfying his natural laziness or engaging in trading. He had to work hard by Tibetan standards and, being young and an official of the seventh rank only, was rewarded with a very small salary. When I asked him what would happen if he resigned, George replied that his estates would be confiscated and that his tough father would probably give him a sound beating. On the whole, the Tibetan nobleman still prefers to hang on to his earthly possessions and privileges in exchange for his duties to the state.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama set up rigorous standards of public service. In the old days, many a lazy governor of a province would rather pay a clerk to take his place in some distant and dull little town, enabling him to lead an active and pleasant social life in Lhasa. The Inmost One forbade this shirking of responsibility and, henceforth, every official had to participate in a three-year shift between a job in Lhasa and some position in a faraway province.

Travels to the outside world are extremely rare. Tibetan noblemen, curious as they are about the rest of the globe, would rather stay in Tibet and enjoy what they think is an earthly paradise. Only traders and mulemen travel to India or China; they often open offices in Kalimpong or Tachienlu, where they work for several years outside their country's borders. But they are always happy to climb back to their quiet and cool native land and enjoy what they consider to be true civilization.

Many government offices are still sold to applicants at a fixed price. The new official is then free to get as much out of his public functions as he can and renders no account to the Lhasa administration. This custom is being steadily restricted now, and on the whole bribery, or "secret push" as the Tibetans call it, is declining. Very slowly and gradually, the administration is modernizing itself. The Lhasa authorities have avoided any serious trouble which would result from their going headlong against established customs. But the evolution is noticeable and, given peace and freedom, the administration of Tibet might have a fairly efficient officialdom in the very near future. Ultimately, everything will depend on the personality of the young Dalai Lama who will wield, when he reaches the age of eighteen and his majority, one of the most absolute powers on earth.

The dzepöns spoke with pride of their country and its institutions. Though interested to know how Western countries were ruled, they were terribly ignorant about them. The only foreign example which they knew at first hand was that of China; any comparison with the government of China would, of course, be highly favourable to the other country, and under those lights Tibet's government was a model set-up.

My curiosity had been satisfied. The dzepöns ended the conversation by asking me if I had seen any sign of discontent during my journey. I confessed that I had seen a great deal of happiness though I had heard bitter complaints from farmers about the necessity of providing free transport for government officials.

"Our taxation policy is very imperfect and we know it," replied the senior dzepön, "but ours is a religious country. Our people know, we all know that nothing really matters but Karma and the search for Truth. Whatever you may think, earthly property does not mean a thing to us. The secret of our happiness is simple—our constant struggle against selfishness and self-deceit, keeping in mind the very words of Lord Buddha: 'Where Truth is, Self is not.' We are a small and weak country. We have no earthly ambitions. All we ask for is to be left in peace, free to practise our great religion."

How simple if the same solution could be applied to political problems in other countries!

CHAPTER XIII

MONKS AND MONASTERIES

EACH MORNING, WHEN waking up in Dekyi Lingka, I saw a breathless Chumpa stumbling about his various tasks as if exhausted by a strenuous effort. One morning, my curiosity got the better of me and I asked:

"Where have you been? You sound as if you were worn out?"

"I have just come back from the Circular Road, sahib. I run round it every morning before waking you up."

"Couldn't you do it some other time?" I replied when I saw him carelessly spill the contents of yesterday's tub on my best pair of shoes.

This Circular Road is one of the sacred pilgrimages of Lhasa. Devotees such as Chumpa are required to walk or run along this six-mile track which encircles the Potala and Lhasa city. Each time I left Dekyi Lingka, I saw pilgrims running on this dusty road mumbling their holy mantras and twirling their prayer wheels. A great many walk the six miles on their knees and I saw more than one progressing by falling flat on their faces and measuring their lengths on the road. Seven thousand such prostrations are required to complete the Circular Road pilgrimage.

"You have an appointment with the Monks' Cabinet at ten o'clock," said Chumpa with his usual precision, bringing out my only decent suit of clothes.

"Which ten o'clock?" I asked. This question was not so silly as it sounds since there are at least five different standard times in Lhasa. Chumpa informed me that an alarm clock

had been sent to Dekyi Lingka so that I would know which time they used. This is the standard procedure in "the Seat of the Gods."

The Monks' Cabinet ten happened to be nine and a quarter by my watch so that I had to hurry and swallow my breakfast before joining George Tsarong. This was my last appointment with an official body. I had, by now, become a real expert at handling these Tibetan interviews; by taking my time, by being very patient and very polite, and by using complimentary language when referring to Tibet, I induced my hosts to talk a great deal about themselves and their work.

This turned out to be even easier than I had anticipated. The four shaven-headed Tungyik Chenpos, majestically garbed in their yellow and purple clerical togas, received me standing on the threshold of a small pagoda in the Jewel Park. There were no formalities whatsoever this time, no silk scarves exchanged and no polite small talk to open the conversation.

Monks always have the upper hand in Tibet and they know it. They have no families or private wealth to protect and worry about; they are, therefore, fearless. Where aristocratic laymen would always be cautious and slightly afraid of jeopardizing their estates and the safety of their relatives, lamas follow their convictions or ambitions without qualms. They always speak bluntly and, often, brutally. They seem to acknowledge that the existence of a lay population is a necessary evil inherent in human weakness but that the ideal society would be a communist theocracy made up exclusively of monks and nuns. Even though they are entirely supported by laymen's labour, lamas always consider that their spiritual work is far more important than any earthly task. Whatever the layman's wealth, however exalted the rank

and position of a Tibetan nobleman, the clergy can confiscate his estates and destroy his power at one stroke.

The four Tungyik Chenpos were remarkable examples of Tibetan monks. If the Ta Lama, the senior member, was a rather placid and smiling man, one of the other three was a different character altogether. With his protruding cheekbones and thin nose, his deep-set piercing eyes and lipless mouth, this extraordinary lama seemed to have a very disquieting, mysterious personality. He took no part in the conversation but his persistent, unblinking glare made me exceedingly uncomfortable. I was told, later on, that he was the real power behind the throne.

All lamas wear a sort of coloured bag hanging down from their belts. In these swinging pockets they carry all the small odds and ends needed during the day. While they fiddled with these improvised toys and twiddled the beads of their rosaries, the Tungyik Chenpos outlined the amazing constitution of Tibet's clergy and external trappings of the Great Doctrine.

There are in Tibet more than four hundred thousand monks gathered into five thousand monasteries. One man out of every three is a monk. Nine lamas out of ten are gelukpas, or Yellow Hats, therefore celibate or supposed to be.

These startling figures explain the great surplus of women and, also, the declining population of the Roof of the World. One does not always become a lama by vocation. Poor families get rid of their children by sending them to a lamasery when they are nine years old. Whether they like it or not, they are ordained and remain lamas for the rest of their lives.

In the monastery, the youngster is entrusted to a relative of the family or guardian who will be in charge of his spiritual training. From then onward, the young monk can

rise to any heights in the earthly hierarchy of the lamaist clergy. The spirit and organization of the Tibetan priesthood are very democratic and the four Tungyik Chenpos who have reached the highest positions in the clergy are self-made men. Family connections have little influence in their appointment to high office and as for personal wealth, they usually have none.

The only undemocratic feature of the lamaist clergy is the existence of Living Buddhas or trülkus. One does not become an official trülku, though, through saintliness, one can reach Buddhahood in one's lifetime. The official trülku has already reached Buddhahood in a past incarnation and has, out of compassion, chosen to be reborn on this earth. Therefore, however hard he works and whatever his spiritual merit may be, a lama can never hope to rise to the height of a trülku though he may wield far more political power. He has to be born a Living Buddha and be discovered after long researches by the lamasery of which he is the eternal and self-perpetuating head. Researches for the reincarnation of a Living Buddha are started, as a rule, two or three years after his death. The treasurer of the lamasery asks an astrologer or an oracle for guidance in his researches. Sometimes he benefits from indications given him by the dying trülku as to the country and family in which he will be reborn. In any case, an important caravan sets out for the country in which the rebirth is supposed to have taken place and the young boy is located. If the numerous tests and examinations are successful, the boy is pompously brought back to the lamasery and solemnly enthroned.

A democratic clergy is the natural counterpart of a powerful nobility. The stable aristocracy acts as a brake on the frequently undisciplined monks and, on the whole, the social constitution of Tibet is well balanced. But whereas the lay

aristocracy rules only that part of Tibet which is under the political authority of Lhasa, the power of the Dalai Lama and of his religious administration under the Monks' Cabinet controls a far greater chunk of territory than Tibet proper. Lhasa is the centre of the lamaist world, a world which extends all over the Himalayas in Ladak and Kashmir, Tehri-Garhwal and Sikkim, Bhutan and northern Assam. Towards the north it extends throughout Inner and Outer Mongolia, the lands of the Buriats and the Kalmucks of Soviet Asia. Towards the east, it includes large slices of Chinese provinces: Tsinghai, Kansu, Szechwan, Sikang and Yunnan. Therefore the Monks' Cabinet is in charge of a multitude of monasteries far beyond the borders of the Roof of the World, many of which are outposts of lamaism, islands of religious organization in the midst of Chinese civil wars or tribal anarchy and banditry. Many of these monasteries are fortified and their lamas regimented into small armies for the protection of their temples. They promote law and order—occasionally disorder—in their area, offer their lamaseries as a haven to the unfortunate and weary travellers, as protection against wild tribes and bandits. Though they are not tightly controlled and Lhasa's authority is often challenged by Chinese intrigues, monasteries such as warlike Chatreng in the south-east or famed Kum-Bum near the lake of Koko Nor still recognize the overall supremacy of the Dalai Lama. Further east, deep inside Chinese territory, many lamaseries rule large slices of land and have set up autonomous states in inaccessible areas. Such a state, for example, is the kingdom of Muli in north-west Yunnan. Ruled by a *gyalpo* or Lama-King, the autonomous state of Muli has its own police force and army, its own laws and administration. Muli controls a large area which it defends against frequent attacks by wild Mantzu tribesmen.

This religious supremacy over a large chunk of Asia brings in more than prestige. It is a precious source of income. Financial contributions from Kashmir, as well as from Mongolia or China, pour into Lhasa. A special branch of the Tibetan Department of Finance has been set up in the Potala, and the fabulous "Treasury of the Sons of Heaven" collects these religious offerings and remittances from all over the lamaist world. Incalculable amounts of gold and silver, rare skins and precious stones, silks and invaluable works of art have been stored in the Potala, century after century, and used as a financial reserve to meet unexpected wars or disasters.

The three largest and most amazing monasteries in the world are situated in the neighbourhood of Lhasa. The "Three Seats" differ from the other large lamaseries of Tibet in that they are not ruled by Living Buddhas. Discipline is more rigid and life more austere—flowers are not permitted, and books on history or legends are prohibited so as to allow the inmates to concentrate purely on their religious studies.

When the Tungyik Chenpos had ended their description of the religious organization in Tibet, I asked them for permission to visit the two largest lamaseries: Drepung and Sera. With a smile on their lips, they granted the permit right away.

More impressive perhaps than the sight of the Potala is Drepung, the Rice Heap lamasery in early morning. This pyramid of golden roofed temples and assembly halls, of brown *garbas* of high lamas and white *tashas* of junior monks, of gleaming chortens and massive dukhangs clusters halfway between the plain of Lhasa and the summit of the surrounding mountains. The dazzling whiteness of this large and mysterious city speckled with myriads of dark unglazed

windows is enhanced by the blue coloration of the hilly background.

Drepung's ten thousand lamas are divided into seven autonomous colleges, each headed by a separate abbot and a treasurer. These fourteen men rule the entire community which is too large to be entrusted to one man alone. Like every Tibetan lamasery, Drepung lives on the income from its huge landed estates which are comparable in size with the estates of the government itself. Thousands of Tibetan farmers toil on these feudal dependencies to support the spiritual work of the lamas from whom no manual labour other than the preparation of buttered tea is required.

My arrival with George did not seem to provoke any display of hospitality or even curiosity. No one was at the main gate to welcome us, and as we entered the large city in search of a lama guide we found deserted streets and what amounted almost to a hostile atmosphere. None of the seven abbots was in Drepung though they had been warned of our visit several days before. We eventually tracked down a young lama official who knew little about the lamasery; slightly frightened, he nevertheless showed us round and explained the reasons for this strange behaviour.

Drepung, a remarkable exception among Tibetan monasteries, has been consistently pro-Chinese and anti-Western. This is due to the fact that the majority of its lamas come from eastern Tibet, which is under Chinese occupation. The desire to conciliate these faraway overlords of their birthplace is at the root of their anti-Western attitude.

Very different was my reception at the lamasery of Sera, the "Rose Fence." Only three miles away from the Potala and, like Drepung, nestling at the foot of a jagged mountain spur, Sera is almost as colossal and imposing as the Rice

Heap. The Rose Fence is also a cluster of temples and white-washed buildings rising up in tiers partly built with an eye to military defence. Offshoots of the lamasery can be seen half-way up the crenellated summit. Into these lonely hermitages, lamas retire who want to devote themselves more thoroughly to their spiritual researches and who cannot stand the hustle and bustle of the crowded monastery below.

Sera's seven thousand monks are divided into four colleges. Except for this, the Rose Fence in its administration and sources of income duplicates the Rice Heap perfectly.

Having been involved in a political conspiracy several weeks before my arrival, Sera had put up an armed resistance against the Tibetan army. According to Lhasa reports, the Sera monks were still seething with rage against the government. George, being an official and none too brave, refused point-blank to come along. I did not argue the point and took one of the young Sikkimese of Dekyi Lingka to replace him.

As we passed the main gate of Sera, I saw literally thousands of curious lamas being shoved off the streets by the tall *dobdobs*, the monastic policemen who form one of the main features of every large lamasery. These athletic guardians of law and order walked ponderously towards the scampering crowd, striking right and left with their long whips. The two proctors who are in charge of internal security in the Rose Fence came out to greet us. With their toga-like robes, their crested yellow caps and large padded shoulders, they looked amazingly like Roman senators of old. Their large embossed iron cudgels reminded me of Roman lictors' maces.

We walked slowly towards the great temple through a deserted main avenue. Crowds of lamas filled the side streets, peered out of the windows or lay flat on the roofs, watching me with intense curiosity.

I was ushered into a long reception room, and introduced to the four smiling abbots who invited me to sit "like a lotus" on a small gilded platform. The four abbots sat Buddha-wise on the right and the Sikkimese interpreter squatted on the left. Most of the afternoon was spent in conversation with the abbots and I drank cup after cup of thick, foaming buttered tea—fourteen cups in all. I was becoming quite a Tibetan!

We talked about everything—religion, philosophy, politics and economics. We also talked about their insufficient water supply and their dried-up well. Eagerly, they invited me to go down into the courtyard, investigate the well for myself and apply some Western magic. Alas, I was of no help whatsoever and advised them to ask the government for a few foreign engineers. To my great surprise, the abbots told me that the majority of the Tibetan lamas would welcome a limited amount of modernization but that no important decisions on the matter could be made before the Dalai Lama had reached his majority.

As if to atone for their political misdeeds, the lamas of Sera seemed to be continuously in prayers. In every duk-hang, services were in progress—bells were rung and drums were beaten throughout the afternoon. The sun was setting slowly and the wonderful lines of the monastery became more precise. The brilliant colours became more vivid and the gold of the temple's roofs glittered with greater intensity. Wrapped in their blood-red togas, lamas walked slowly through the narrow streets, lost in meditation or speaking in low voices. The excitement of my arrival had died down and they had returned to their customary life, while the hospitable abbots took me on a grand tour of their Rose Fence.

As we went through their vast library, one of the abbots explained to me the spirit of Lamaism. A Tibetan lamasery

knows no set rules such as exist in a Christian monastery. Lamas come and go as they please, think what they want. They can be atheists or agnostics or belong to any of the numerous Buddhist sects. No one is entitled to bring pressure on them. There is no compulsion to attend religious services or worship any special deity. In other words, complete freedom in matters of religious discipline and spiritual research is the rule in Tibet, the higher forms of religious knowledge being self-existing and obtainable for those who are prepared to seek for Ultimate Truth.

As I left Sera, the twilight cast a bluish veil over the immense lamasery. The temples and colleges of what looked like a vast necropolis soon vanished as I turned round for a last glance, merging with the dark mountains in the background.

CHAPTER XIV

SOCIAL LIFE IN THE "SEAT OF THE GODS"

Social customs change a great deal from one country to another. Tibet, for instance, leads every other country in the world as far as the duration of social receptions goes. Though it is not rare to see festivities lasting an entire week in Tibet, a modest luncheon party in Lhasa starts at about ten in the morning and ends about nine that night. With an amazing amount of energy and purposefulness, Lhasa society amuses itself all day, long after an exhausted foreign guest has had to retire. With the most refined manners and the most exquisite politeness inherited from the Chinese mandarins, Lhasa aristocrats could be called in many respects the most civilized and the most delightfully idle society on earth.

There were several large parties at Dekyi Lingka which many prominent citizens of Lhasa and their wives attended at one time or another. Large tents were erected in the gardens, chairs and rugs were brought out, British magazines and games were spread on low tables.

Guests streamed into the courtyard between ten and eleven. From my window, I could watch the numerous salaams, the tongue-pulling and the hissing of pigtailed servants and the bustle of a medieval crowd. When the clattering of horses' hoofs on the cobblestones had ceased and the beasts had been taken away by the chaprassis, silk-brocaded officials with their dangling turquoise earrings and purple-robed lamas hatted with their gilded pagodas walked

towards the vast gardens. Hugh Richardson, always dignified, received them with the help of Pemba, the smiling Sikkimese who directed the Indian Mission. The lamas were usually gay and affable, talkative and open to any subject of conversation. The lay officials and aristocrats were more reserved, more conscious of their respective positions. Slightly snobbish, sometimes effeminate, always keen on outdoor games, they were reluctant to be mixed with officials of lower ranks. Their wives, especially, always insisted on the rigid protocol according to which the spouse of an official of the fourth rank, for example, could not, without feeling insulted, be invited to a party with the wife of an official of the fifth or sixth rank. Their husbands, always cautious when important lamas were present, were far more at ease amongst themselves or even with foreigners.

The meals at Dekyi Lingka were of exclusively British Indian style. The Sikkimese cook stubbornly refused to concoct buttered tea or prepare the Chinese delicacies which are the favourite food of Lhasa society.

When lunch, which lasted at least three hours, was at last over, the largest room was converted into a moving-picture theatre, soon overflowing with guests and servants. Only short reels were projected and, as far as I was concerned, the show was not on the screen but on the faces and in the amazed expressions of the audience. One of the greatest successes was a picture on life among the Pygmies of darkest Africa. When the film was over and daylight was allowed to brighten the room, illuminating the ravished faces of the audience, the Ta Lama came up to me and, deeply puzzled, asked:

"How is it that there are still such backward people in the world? I thought that you white men had civilized Africa!"

For those who enjoyed outdoor sports, there was rifle

shooting, musical arrows or darts. Chess, card games and mahjongg were also highly appreciated. Last but not least, there was conversation which I carried on through George or through one of the Sikkimese interpreters of Dekyi Lingka. I made friends with a good many of the leading Tibetans, getting their views not only on Tibetan politics but on Asiatic problems as well. Their knowledge of China and Central Asia was extensive and their viewpoint, though completely different from that of a European or an American, was amazingly profound.

Reluctant as they are to let foreigners penetrate into their country, the hospitality of Tibetans is boundless to the fortunate peling who is allowed in. I received a staggering number of invitations to visit private homes in and around the Forbidden City and often availed myself of this unique opportunity to study a way of life which is, in its mixture of medievalism and modern touch, unique in the world.

Nothing could have surprised me more than to see the modern comfort amid which the wealthy Tibetans—"those whose lips are always moistened with tea" as the saying goes in Tibet—live in Lhasa. Electricity is supplied to the Potala and to a great many private residences by a diesel plant working under the supervision of a young Tibetan engineer trained in England. There is no respectable house without its radio set which can be tuned to broadcasts from Delhi or Calcutta. As there is an increasingly important English-speaking group among the young officials who have been educated in Darjeeling, British and American books fill many private libraries. Magazines, reviews and newspapers from India and Britain cover their Chinese-style tables. The leading families in Lhasa even subscribe to the only Tibetan newspaper in existence. This periodical is printed and

published in Kalimpong for its one hundred and forty subscribers!

Plumbing and fixtures are usually primitive unless they be non-existent. But in George Tsarong's house, for example, I saw a bathroom worthy of a first-class hotel in New York. Every inch of shining pipe, every tap and every tile had been carried to Lhasa on muleback.

Private residences are often built on the outskirts of the expanding capital, in the midst of extensive gardens in which every kind of flower could be found, even concealed behind bushes and groves. With their flat roofs, their large glazed windows and the simplicity of their lines, most of these houses struck me as being amazingly modern-looking. Jigme Taring, for example, is a young official, slightly older than George and one of the most intelligent among the young Tibetans. He was brought up in India, speaks English fluently. When he came back to Lhasa in 1940, he built a courtyard house in which can be found all the best among Western gadgets. At the same time, most of the furniture of the first floor is pure Tibetan style, made to order for him during the Second World War but chiselled according to centuries-old traditions.

In spite of this modern touch, the complete absence of motorized transport and even of wheeled vehicles in Lhasa soon carries the foreigner back to some unknown medievalism. Stables occupy a large portion of the stately mansions of Lhasa's feudal lords and all day long, in Tsarong's house for instance, one can hear neighing horses clattering in the courtyard and groups of mules delivering the vast supplies needed to feed a numerous household.

Whenever we went riding together, George would always be on the lookout for high ranking officials coming from

the opposite direction. George obeyed scrupulously and somewhat fearfully every regulation of the Tibetan administration's code. One of these rules prescribes that when two officials meet in the street or on a road, the lower rank dismounts and bows respectfully until the higher rank has passed on its way. George, mindful of promotion possibilities, never missed a salutation and, being of the seventh rank only, our progress through Lhasa was amazingly slow. Though I always stayed on my horse throughout these ceremonies, I never knew exactly how to behave and the other officials were just as embarrassed.

A European or an American has a great deal to learn from Tibet, not only in matters of mysticism or religion but also in social customs. Tibet is one of the few countries in the world where polygamy and polyandry are universally practised. Women have a higher status in Tibet than anywhere else in Asia. Not only are they perfectly free and do they inherit wealth on equal terms with men, but they can often become head of the family and give their name to their husbands. Such was the case, for instance, with George's father. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama had chosen a young favourite of a poor and humble family. This young man who once saved the life of the Inmost One and was given the name of Pure Moon was rewarded in typical Tibetan fashion. A wealthy and important aristocrat by the name of Tsarong had been executed for pro-Chinese activities. The Dalai Lama ordered his widow to take Pure Moon for a husband and give him the name of her deceased mate. Pure Moon became in time Tsarong Shape, minister of war, and is now the wealthiest man in Tibet.

That polyandry should be popular in Tibet, where one man out of every two or three is a celibate monk, is odd.

However, in spite of the shortage of men, women are legally entitled to have as many husbands as they can afford to support. I saw a good many such families in which the wealthy woman bosses with an iron fist her three or four husbands. I remember having entered into conversation with a masterful wife who was the owner of three subdued husbands and who was reputed to be a hard task-maker. She asked me quite innocently:

"Have women been able to get rid of those dreadful harems in America or are they still as miserable as they are in India?"

Divorces are easy but expensive. If a husband asks for a divorce, he has to pay according to an old law a lump sum proportionate to the number of nights spent with his wife.

Laxity in sexual relations is one of the sore spots of Tibetan life and is the source of the few widespread diseases on the Roof of the World. Few germs can exist at such heights but the spoiled Tibetans seem to seek every opportunity to increase sickness and propagate epidemics. This laxity in sexual relations has reached its peak with the increasingly popular custom of marrying not only one's mate but also all the members of the family belonging to the opposite sex, including cousins. If there were any lawyers in Tibet, they would have plenty of work trying to disentangle the ensuing confusion.

Numerous requests had to be made before I was allowed to visit in George's company the stupendous Potala Palace. The better part of a day was required to go through this world of government offices and shrines, through the private apartments of the Dalai Lama and the imposing throne room which is not used in summer. After having been conducted through innumerable rooms, along miles of passages and stairs, I saw the five colossal tombs of the greatest Dalai

Lamas. Built on the model of a chorten, they spring from the lower floor of the Red Palace and shoot up through the upper floors to the roof where their summits emerge into five glittering pagodas roofed with sheets of solid gold. Inside the palace, spiralling balconies surround these golden mausoleums.

In an atmosphere heavy with the aromatic scent of frankincense mixed with the smell of rancid butter, we went through the lamasery which is built on the roof of the Potala. The ruler is the abbot of the private monastery which houses five hundred monks. From the edge of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's favourite promenade, I admired a truly magnificent view, not only of Lhasa and its gardens but of the entire plain as far as the bend of the Kyi Chu River towards the south.

We went down again, through mazes of corridors and dark rooms. There was no end to this descent into the depths of the earth, through mysterious-looking vaults and caves. And I was not allowed to see everything. Large doors were padlocked and to my questions as to the existence of legendary passages leading to a mysterious subterranean lake, our guide replied only with a quizzical smile. As he evaded my questions, I asked if I could take a little sheet of gold out of a pagoda's roof for a souvenir. Our amiable guide roared with laughter.

George and I had been allowed to ride up to the higher floors of the Potala and leave our horses in the main courtyard. We decided to walk down the huge external stairs which zigzag into the agglomeration lying at the foot of the hill. On this same staircase, thirty to forty thousand lamas celebrate the New Year festivals with colossal processions under the moonlight, carrying flaming torches up and down the Potala, encircling the Cyclopean place with ribbons of

fire. Our guide described this extraordinary sight and the magnificence of the festival. Chanting their wistful psalmodies, beating thousands of drums and gongs, blowing on their deep conch shells and trumpets from the Potala's roof, these armies of lamas illuminate the plain of Lhasa, the heart of Tibet, and pray for the coming of the future Buddha Maitreya.

After all my official calls had been paid, a private audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama was arranged. Preceded by George and followed by Chumpa, I went back to the Jewel Park. Instead of going to the Audience Hall, we were conducted over a marble bridge to the small pagoda which I had seen through the groves on my first visit. While swans sailed majestically on the lake amid white lotus, I was ushered in front of a small lacquered throne placed on the veranda. The young bareheaded God-King was seated amid baskets full of gorgeous flowers and a dozen giant Khamba lamas of the bodyguard stood at the foot of the steps.

As no foreigner is allowed to speak to the Dalai Lama until he has reached his majority, the interview had been arranged solely for the purpose of taking pictures. George, who is a keen photographer but who is not allowed to practise while he is on official duty, had handed me his movie camera just as we crossed the marble bridge. He asked me to use it alongside my own cameras while he prostrated himself on the ground according to the old ritual.

I took my time, requested that His Holiness should move to the right or to the left, up and down the stairs. With an ironical smile on his face, he always complied graciously when requested by the chamberlain to displace his august person. I was surprised to see that the monks of the household treated the young ruler somewhat roughly, as if he were an

ordinary boy instead of being the highest Living Buddha. Still, they were always respectful and their deference grows as time passes on until the ruler reaches his majority and with it, supreme power.

The Dalai Lama's education is entirely in the hands of the clergy. Intellectually, he works hard with various teachers who are supposed to be the best in Tibet. According to century-old traditions, the subject matters are: sacred scriptures and ritual, medicine which is derived from India's Ayurvedic medicine, magic, philosophy and metaphysics. Modern science, foreign languages and politics have no part in his education. A few sports are allowed inside the Jewel Park such as riding or archery but he cannot travel out of Lhasa.

Whether this type of education will prepare the young ruler adequately is very doubtful. His complete lack of political knowledge of the outside world combined with an absolute political power in Lhasa will be a highly dangerous combination. However, everything will depend on his choice of ministers and advisers, on his psychological judgment and his ability to choose the right men whenever they are available in Tibet.

Peering into the future without knowing the past is an unprofitable pastime. The knowledge of what his predecessor the great Thirteenth Dalai Lama did during his lifetime is of vital importance to anyone who wants to gauge the future of the Roof of the World. As running around Lhasa and interviewing prominent people was only part of my work, I decided to spend more time studying the archives of Dekyi Lingka. In these documents is enclosed the history of Tibet and to a large extent of Asia during the first half of the twentieth century. I could not really understand and get to know Tibet until I had a thorough grasp of Central Asia's

political evolution since the dawn of our century. The somewhat cold and dry accounts of these contemporary happenings were often animated by descriptions which eyewitnesses gave me at one time or another. In this history of the twentieth-century Tibet, China plays an important and inglorious part; if I had incorporated the Tibetan feelings and emotions which were often conveyed to me, a great deal of this fascinating tale would have lost the balance which is indispensable to any impartial judgment of history.

It is probably fitting that the history of Tibet in this materialistic century should often provide strange contrasts and mixtures of modernism and magic, that it should emphasize the strange interplay of occult forces and western influence and that it should help to understand the deep but powerful and dimly perceived currents which are now shaking Asia to its foundations.

It is also fitting, therefore, that Tibet's emergence as a political problem in this century should be preceded by a strange prophecy.

CHAPTER XV

TIBET AND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

WHEN, FOR THE first time in history, the Roof of the World was invaded from the south, from beyond the Himalayas, its inhabitants put up a fierce resistance in spite of the fact that their oracles had predicted this calamity and their defeat long ago. The chief medical officer of the Younghusband expedition, Lieutenant-Colonel Waddell, a Buddhist scholar who had been familiar with Tibetan literature for many years, wrote in his history of the expedition:

"How the astrologers of Tibet were able to predict this distressful storm which was in store for their country, so long before it happened, and to specify that it should occur exactly in this very year is amazing. Certain it is that the prophetic words . . . . . . were copied out by myself about a year before our expedition was ever heard of, from a Tibetan manuscript almanac for the ill-starred year of the Wood-Dragon of the fantastic calendar of the Lamas."

Yet, Waddell, astride his typically Victorian faith in material progress and his contempt for psychic problems, had to acknowledge this uncanny and by no means unique example of political prophecy in Tibet. Notwithstanding this prediction of their defeat, Tibetan troops covered with heavy armours, armed with medieval bows and antiquated muzzle-loaders, put up a brave but hopeless resistance against the small Indian army. Skirmishes and battles occurred in the Chumbi Valley, then near Tuna and at Gyangtse. After a serious encounter at the Karo La Pass, the Younghusband

mission finally reached Lhasa on August 3, 1904 and set up a camp on the outskirts of the Holy City.

The twenty-year-old Dalai Lama had resisted as much as he could and, faced with complete defeat, decided to flee to Mongolia, entrusting the administration of the country to a very capable regent, the Ganden Rimpoche. Younghusband and the regent negotiated with patience and moderation; an agreement was finally reached and a treaty signed according to which the Tibetan government recognized the British protectorate over Sikkim, agreed to trade with India and to prevent other foreigners from exercising any kind of influence in Tibet. All subsequent dealings between British India and Tibet were based on this treaty.

Not only did Younghusband negotiate successfully this political agreement, he also went through an amazing psychic experience which Paul Brunton describes in *A Hermit in The Himalayas*:

"When the British Army under Colonel Younghusband's command did succeed in reaching Lhasa . . . . . . a curious thing happened to its leader. He told me that the day following this event, he obeyed a profound urge and went off alone up the steep rocky hill which overlooks Lhasa. After climbing for some time he sat down on a boulder and rested. Quickly there came to him the most overwhelming spiritual experience of his life. His whole being was uplifted into a kind of mystic ecstasy. Utter serenity seeped through his soul. There was nothing personal in the experience, for all his desires sank into nothingness before the wonderful impersonal peace that enveloped him. He came down from that hill with a memorable event engraved on his memory for ever. Tibet had given him more than a military conquest; it gave him spiritual illumination."

That was Tibet's mystical answer to a military invasion.

Soon after the signature of the peace agreement, the Younghusband mission returned to India and the seclusion of "forbidden" Tibet was resumed.

The position of the Chinese during this affair was peculiar. Though Tibet was part of the Manchu Empire, the military invasion by the British did not bring war between the two empires. The Chinese, in fact, were glad to see the power of the independent and aggressive Dalai Lama crushed by a foreign power. On orders from Peking, the ambans in Lhasa set up proclamations deposing the God-King, and ending with the traditional warning: "Tremble with fear and obey the orders of the Great Khan." But the Tibetans took no notice of the proclamations which they covered with dung and tore down. As far as possible, they continued referring to their lawful ruler all important matters of policy and administration.

The Chinese thought it clever to ask the Panchen Lama, second highest Incarnation in Tibet, to become regent. In this way they hoped to produce a rift between the two Living Buddhas—between Lhasa and Shigatse; but the Panchen Lama, who was more spiritually than politically minded, felt that it would be safer to refuse. The prestige of the Manchus was now at a low ebb in Tibet and the anti-Chinese feeling became so intense after this demonstration of weakness in front of the British invasion that no Tibetan wanted to associate himself with the ambans.

Meanwhile the Dalai Lama was fleeing towards the north, through the bleak and desolate northern plains, crossing the territory of the great robber tribes. The wild Goloks and Mongol bandits, as well as princes, farmers and shepherds came to prostrate themselves in front of the Inmost One, offering presents and their protection. Beyond

the lake of Koko Nor, then through the Gobi Desert, rode the God-King with a following of seven hundred people and thousands of camels. The Dalai Lama finally reached Urga, the capital of Mongolia and seat of the highest Mongolian Living Buddha. More than twenty thousand Mongolians came out of Urga to meet him and prostrate themselves on the sand in front of the highest Incarnation in the Buddhist world. While salvoes of artillery announced the arrival of the God-King of Tibet, pilgrims flocked to Urga from Russian Siberia, China and Turkestan.

Though he occupied in Mongolia a position similar to that of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, the Hutuktu of Urga was inferior in rank to the Inmost One. This unforeseen competition bothered him a great deal and the two Living Buddhas quarrelled frequently. The Hutuktu smoked, drank wine and had married, three great sins for a gelukpa, and the Dalai Lama strongly objected to his spiritual brother's debauches.

Fortunately for the Hutuktu, the Inmost One was kept busy with his political affairs. Pokotiloff, the Russian ambassador to the court of Peking, rushed to Urga as soon as he had heard of His Holiness's arrival and, handing him presents from the Czar, assured him that Tibet could count on Russia's help and friendship. Delighted, the Dalai Lama dispatched Dorjieff to St. Petersburg to ask for assistance and protection.

Meanwhile, the God-King resumed his wanderings through Kansu and Szechwan. Though the British-Indian mission had left Tibet long ago, the Chinese government did not allow the troublesome Dalai Lama to return to Lhasa. His Holiness had been surprised to hear about the moderation and good behaviour of the British-Indian troops during the occupation of his Holy City. When all his hopes of Russian friendship and help had been shattered by the

Anglo-Russian convention on Asia (August 1907) in which Russia promised to keep hands off Tibet, the Dalai Lama turned timidly towards the British and sent a complimentary note to the British ambassador in Peking. He suggested forgetting all about the misunderstandings of the past and inaugurating friendly relations between Tibet and India.

Yet, he was virtually a prisoner in China, free to go where he wanted but forbidden to return to Tibet. In September 1908, the Dalai Lama was invited to Peking and in his golden Chair of State made a sumptuous entrance into the capital city of the Chinese empire. He settled down in the Yellow Temple which had been built by a Manchu emperor for the Great Fifth Dalai Lama near the Tartar city, and his struggle with the Chinese government started almost immediately. First of all he quarrelled with the Manchu administration about his audience with the emperor which he wished to conduct as the Great Fifth had conducted his—two sovereigns meeting each other on equal terms. But Mongolia and Tibet were united and powerful in those days; now Mongolia was weak and the Dalai Lama was a political refugee. He refused to kowtow and prostrate himself in front of the Dragon Throne; the audience had to be postponed. A few days later the Chinese gave in partly and the Dalai Lama was only required to touch the ground with his right knee in front of the Son of Heaven.

The more important part of his struggle concerned the future government of Tibet. The Dowager Empress, Tzu Hsi, who was the real ruler of the empire, wanted to annex Tibet outright and carve it into Chinese provinces, a solution which His Holiness refused indignantly. While this haggling went on with the Chinese government, the deep rumblings of the forthcoming revolution could be heard in Peking

and the Dalai Lama was aware of them, as Tibetan oracles had predicted the forthcoming upheavals long previously.

On November 14, 1908, just a few weeks after his audience with the humiliated Dalai Lama, Emperor Kwang Su died mysteriously after all his dreams of political and social reforms in China had been crushed by his fanatical old aunt. The old empress followed him just as unexpectedly the next day. No one in Tibet doubted that the mysterious deaths of the imperial rulers was a punishment from Heaven—the God-King had been humiliated and had swiftly taken his revenge. The long period of mourning which followed the death of the two Manchu sovereigns interrupted the Sino-Tibetan negotiations for an indefinite length of time. Becoming impatient, the Dalai Lama finally asked for permission to return to Lhasa and resume negotiations from his capital. The distracted Chinese granted the request.

On the twenty-first of December 1908, the Dalai Lama left Peking on his return journey to Tibet, at the head of a colourful and numerous cavalcade. He reached Lhasa almost a year later, in December 1909, a much wiser man in the sphere of world politics.

But a great deal happened during that year. As soon as the Inmost One had left Peking, the astute Chinese decided to go ahead with their plan to annex Tibet as speedily as possible. While the Dalai Lama wasted his time on the way home, visiting monasteries in western China and tightening up their slack discipline, a new Chinese general was put in command of a Chinese army with orders to invade Tibet. This ruthless administrator-soldier, Chao Erh-Feng, started a methodical conquest of eastern Tibet with the help of the

Viceroy of Szechwan. Fording with great difficulty the foaming waters of the Yalung, Yangtze, Mekong and Salween rivers, climbing towards the Roof of the World through the impenetrable jungles of Kham and fighting off attacks by wild aboriginal tribes, the Chinese army of Chao Erh-Feng eventually reached the wealthy provinces of eastern Tibet. All the local states acknowledging Lhasa's suzerainty such as the kingdoms of Batang and Derge were abolished and absorbed by the new Chinese administration.

In the beginning of 1910, two months after his arrival in the Holy City, the second great blow of his career fell on the weary head of the Inmost One. Plundering and murdering, the invading Chinese arrived in the neighbourhood of Lhasa and an advance guard of Chinese cavalry burst into the streets of the city with the mission of seizing the Dalai Lama and making him a prisoner in the Potala.

The ruler promptly made up his mind. His enemies were now in the east and his potential friends were in the south. He fled towards India, starting in the deep of night, and in one mighty effort reached the banks of the Tsang Po on the following morning, hotly pursued by Chinese soldiers. While he splashed his way across the river, his faithful attendant Chensa Nang-Kang, the future Tsarong Shape, held in check two hundred Chinese soldiers with a handful of loyal Tibetans.

On and on rode the Living Buddha. In midwinter, almost frozen to death in the Plain of the Three Brothers, almost buried by snowstorms near Mount Chomolhari, the fugitive reached Phari Dzong. The Dalai Lama decided to go to India instead of seeking refuge in Bhutan which was only two miles away and galloped down the Chumbi Valley, hoisted himself breathlessly up to the Jelep La Pass, avoiding the small Chinese garrisons on the way. He finally

arrived in Kalimpong and made a dignified entrance into the great trading centre of Bengal.

A new exile was starting this time, under the shadow of British-Indian protection. Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs as well as Buddhists flocked to pay their respects to the Inmost One, who finally asked to be given a secluded villa near Darjeeling. From there he found it easier to continue ruling his country in spite of the Chinese occupation.

During his stay in India, the Dalai Lama paid a solemn visit to Calcutta, then the capital of the Indian Empire and seat of the British viceroy. In those days, the Indian Empire included far more than India: Ceylon, Burma and far-flung colonies such as Aden were part of a huge political agglomeration whose modern evolution was far more peaceful than that of the war-torn Far East. The exiled Tibetans examined with wonder and admiration the complicated but efficient administration of the world of the Indian Ocean, its material progress under the firm hand of the white barbarians. Comparing what they saw now with what they had seen in China, the Tibetans became convinced that a prosperous future for their country depended on a deep friendship with the southern empire of India.

But in spite of the Inmost One's entreaties, the British refused to bring pressure to bear on the Chinese; they adopted a policy of complete neutrality, helping to soften the Dalai Lama's exile as much as they could, but interfering in no way in Tibetan politics. It was during this exile that the Dalai Lama laid the basis of a deep and enduring friendship with Sir Charles Bell who was to become the British Agent for Tibet and Bhutan.

Meanwhile, the Chinese had again deposed the Dalai Lama, (February 25, 1910) and had, once more, tried to

nominate the Panchen Lama as Regent of Tibet. Though he was very much tempted to accept, the Panchen Lama refused for the second time, knowing perfectly well that if he became a willing tool of the Chinese he would have to face the bitter hostility of the Lhasa authorities and of their Tibetan National Assembly.

Rebuked, the Chinese decided to take over the direct government of the country and, pushing their troops westward as far as Gartok and the border of Ladak, occupied the whole of Tibet. Whatever control they exercised was very loose, however, and most Tibetans still considered the exiled Dalai Lama as their lawful ruler. Chinese edicts and proclamations were torn down or plastered with dung by the outraged population.

The exiled God-King appealed several times to the Maharaja of Nepal, whose predecessor had concluded a treaty with Tibet in 1856. According to this pact, Nepal was under obligation to defend Tibet in case of invasion, in exchange for the grant of privileges to Nepalese subjects in Tibet. But the maharaja refused to move.

Appeals to the British King and the Russian Czar were similarly fruitless and the Chinese went on carving Tibet into Chinese provinces, ousting all the leading and educated Tibetans from official positions in favour of Chinese mandarins. The Dalai Lama, with the help of the Tibetan administration and secret agents which he sent up to the Roof of the World, managed to block the Chinese efforts successfully. One of these agents was the future Tsarong Shape who had rejoined the Dalai Lama in exile after his heroic battle against the pursuing Chinese on the banks of the Tsang Po. He had been given the name of Pure Moon and travelled in disguise all over Tibet, inciting farmers and townspeople to revolt against the Chinese invaders, organizing and keeping alive a strong resistance movement.

But what hope was there of ever defeating the mighty Chinese Empire? Very little, thought most of the exiled Tibetans. Only the well-informed Dalai Lama knew that there were signs of an impending revolution in Peking and he kept his ear close to the ground, listening hopefully to the deep rumblings which were shaking the foundations of the Celestial Empire.

The Dalai Lama's forecast proved to be correct. Eternal Karma was at work and the Chinese were going to be punished for their unwarranted aggression against Tibet. Revolution broke out in Peking during the autumn of 1911 and the young Manchu Emperor Hsuan Tung was deposed. Spreading all over China like wildfire, the uprising gripped the empire under the moral leadership of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen. Most Manchu garrisons in China were massacred by the enraged Chinese people, the humiliating pigtails were cut off and all traces of Manchu domination were swept away.

This was the beginning of the disintegration of the colossus of the Far East, of the great Celestial Empire and of all the moral values it stood for. That disintegration was more than political; it was the downfall of a civilization, of the ruling mandarins who were democratically recruited through antiquated intellectual competition and who had proved unable to absorb the new industrial civilization which they professed to despise. The times had changed quickly and it was not long ago when ambassadors from the barbarian people of the west were sent away because they refused to kowtow in front of the Son of Heaven! Many an old mandarin could still remember those days.

One of the features of the uprising was that the Chinese were tearing down the domination of the foreign Manchus and, in this respect, the revolution was an outburst of

Chinese nationalism. But with the illogical mentality which characterizes all such upheavals, the Chinese had no intention of granting their freedom to the other people who had been part of the empire and they intended to transform the former Manchu dominions into a new Chinese nation. This, of course, proved impossible.

As in the case with all empires, the component parts of this vast agglomeration of different nations tended to separate themselves from the main body as soon as the common ideal or common link had disappeared. In this case it was the common allegiance to the Dragon Throne and the common ideal of the mandarin civilization. Of all the component parts of the empire, the best prepared for independent nationhood was Tibet.

In November 1911, the Chinese garrisons on the Roof of the World mutinied. They murdered their officers and started roaming through the Tibetan countryside, looting, raping and killing innocent civilians. Under the distant guidance of the exiled Dalai Lama, the Tibetan population rose against the invaders and organized scattered groups of armed men who fought the Chinese troops of occupation. Each time a difficult problem had to be solved, messengers were dispatched to the Dalai Lama, asking for advice.

A typically Tibetan answer was given to a Tibetan officer who asked whether he was to attack some nearby Chinese troops were who billeted in a lamasery. The Dalai Lama sent a wire:

"If they are stronger than you, send them off with soft words. If you are stronger than they are, cut them off by the root."

The Indian telegraph, naturally, refused to send this message.

The Tibetan revolt was not absolutely unanimous, unfortunately. Though he had refused the position of regent, the Panchen Lama was in secret relationship with the Chinese. So were several great monasteries such as Drepung and Tengyeling. The Inmost One went ahead, nevertheless, disregarding the criticism of orthodox Buddhists who refused to kill even if it was to defend their holy religion. One by one, the undisciplined Chinese units were disarmed by the tough but untrained Tibetans. Most of the invaders had their lives spared and were deported to India, thence shipped back to China by the British.

In June 1912, the Dalai Lama returned from India and made a solemn and pompous entrance into Lhasa. He settled down in his gigantic Potala Palace and resumed his rule. Tibet was inaugurating her existence as an independent and happy nation at a time when the whole of Asia was beginning to be swept by a hurricane of wars and revolutions such as had never been witnessed by history.

Misfortunes and invasions had poured over the Roof of the World as rain falls on a house, and like the rain which streams down to the ground and leaves the roof clean and shining under the returned sun so did the invaders and foreigners leave Tibet and stream down to India and China. Once more, Tibet returned to its mysterious seclusion.

CHAPTER XVI

RULE OF THE THIRTEENTH DALAI LAMA

WHILE TIBET WAS starting on her new career as an independent nation, China was undergoing a tremendous change. From now on, although there was always, nominally at least, one central government, provinces and autonomous districts assumed a great deal of independence. Out of the disintegration of the Manchu Empire, a semi-feudality arose just as in western Europe after the downfall of the Roman Empire. But there was no predominant religion to restrain these Chinese feudal lords as Christianity had done in medieval Europe and most of them behaved like ordinary bandits. Warlords popped up all over China from under the wreckage of the mandarin administration, their armies constantly fighting, looting and murdering.

Yuan Shih-Kai, the first president of the newborn Chinese Republic, sent a telegram to the Dalai Lama apologizing for the bad behaviour of the Chinese troops in Tibet and restoring the God-King's title and privileges. The Inmost One replied ironically that he did not ask the Chinese for any title as he was the political and religious ruler of an independent country. Tibet's position was thus made perfectly clear.

The Dalai Lama was a far more mature person after his numerous trials and adventures. He had shown great courage and resourcefulness during eight years of absence from Tibet, as well as unlimited will power and a remarkable ability to endure hardship. His first-hand knowledge, if not of the world, at least of his two great neighbours, China and

India, was tremendous and was going to prove extremely valuable in the near future.

He had also become very pro-British. The moderation of Younghusband and the good treatment which he had received during his exile in India had opened his eyes and he tried several times to obtain for his country guarantees of protection which Britain was not prepared to give. His friendship with Sir Charles Bell increased steadily and the British political agent received weekly letters from the Inmost One asking him for advice on all matters dealing with the internal administration or foreign policy of Tibet.

The Dalai Lama, with his great personal superiority of intellect and character over the Tibetan ruling circles, became in time a complete autocrat. Though he was careful not to antagonize powerful monasteries or the National Assembly, he always ended by doing exactly what he wanted. He never delegated any portion of his immense power to subordinates and had eventually to assume an intolerable burden. Even the National Assembly he increasingly disregarded:

"The Parliament talk and talk, but this matter cannot wait. I will not summon the full body; I will call together the small committee of it; they will be quicker and less obstructive."

When the last Chinese soldier had been expelled from Tibet, the Inmost One had a fairly strong army at his disposal with which he could intimidate the most independent lamaseries. But the necessity of waging war against the Chinese warlords on the eastern border absorbed most of the efforts of his fighting forces. He therefore had to rely more on diplomacy and cunning than military strength to keep the monks under control.

The Dalai Lama led a very secluded life on the summit of the Potala or in the Jewel Park and was rarely seen in public. He granted few audiences to foreigners, mainly to

Chinese and to Mongols; as for the Tibetans, they always kowtowed reverently in his presence and hardly ever looked him in the eyes. The mystery surrounding his person and reports of his great psychic powers increased the awe which all Tibetans felt for their ruler and swept away all obstacles to the complete domination of his will.

For twenty-one years, the Thirteenth Vice-Regent of Buddha was going to guide the Roof of the World through the political storms and social upheavals which were then shaking the whole of Asia. No sooner had Tibet been at last reunited under his authority than Chinese aggression started on the border of Szechwan province; two Tibetan districts were occupied by the invaders. As the British refused to supply Tibet with arms and ammunition, the Dalai Lama turned to Russia and received several consignments of rifles from the Czar.

In the autumn of 1913, a conference was held in Simla between delegates of China, Tibet and India. In April 1914 a convention was signed by the representatives of the three countries. The sigh of relief which followed was premature. Two days later, the Chinese government in Peking repudiated the convention. India and Tibet, nevertheless, have considered themselves bound by this treaty ever since.

Chinese aggression in the east continued while the Simla conference was in progress and never relented. A Tibetan army, ten thousand strong, kept watch and fought off the Chinese aggressors. Bad communications and poor crops made it difficult for Tibet to keep up such a large army which could only be supplied by huge caravans of yaks and mules, but those same poor communications prevented the Chinese from pushing very far into Tibetan territory.

When the First World War broke out in August 1914, the Dalai Lama offered a thousand soldiers to the allies. He added, sarcastically, that as the British had turned down his request for permission to import military equipment through India, he could not supply his men with arms. Meanwhile, the Chinese warlord of Szechwan concluded a truce with Lhasa which was to last until the war was over.

During the entire period of the hostilities, prayers were said in Tibet for the successes of the allies. Internal conditions, however, were not as good as they should have been. Relations between Lhasa and Shigatse were strained; the Inmost One suspected the Panchen Lama of pro-Chinese activities and he sought to curtail his political importance as much as was possible. In spite of their political antagonism, the Dalai Lama was highly conscious of his inferiority in the field of religious knowledge. In one of his letters to the Panchen Rimpoche, he wrote wistfully:

"I am classified in a very low degree regarding my education on account of the worldly work which I have to do. But I worship the feet of many lamas in Upper and Lower Tibet with my head and I have received from them many valuable religious instructions."

For some obscure reason which was probably political, the Panchen Lama left Shigatse in the early twenties and fled to China. He wandered all over this country and, never returning to Tibet, died in November 1937. During his exile, the Chinese government paid his followers huge sums of money and tried to use him against the Dalai Lama in order to increase the internal frictions in Tibet. In spite of this, the Dalai Lama remained friendly towards his spiritual colleague and asked him several times to return to Shigatse. Each time the Panchen Lama's numerous enemies in the National Assembly blocked this peace move, pretending that

with him, Chinese influence would return to Tibet. Even the Inmost One could not overcome such strong opposition. On his side, the Panchen Rimpoche was surrounded with ambitious men who wanted to destroy the Dalai Lama's pre-eminence and who kept this hostility alive.

World War I was over and in the year of the Iron-Bird (1921), sitting on his throne on the top of the Potala, the God-King of Tibet watched the great changes that had come to the Asiatic continent. North and south, east and west, in the large countries lying below the ring of clouds which constantly surround Tibet, revolutions and civil wars were tearing apart the old civilizations of Asia.

To the south, beyond the Himalayas, his rear was fairly secure. Though Mahatma Gandhi's influence was steadily increasing, British power in India was still strong and friendly. The progress of the Congress party and of Gandhi's mystical-political influence was something which the Tibetans could understand better than any other political movement in Asia. The close affinities between Buddhism and Hinduism made it possible for the Tibetans to feel sympathetic towards such movements as the Satyagraha campaign. Though he thought that Gandhi went too far in his attacks against the British Raj, the Dalai Lama felt that a compromise would finally be reached between Indians and British, if not now, perhaps in a generation. Meanwhile, there was a political stability in the world of the Indian Ocean which was sorely lacking in central and eastern Asia.

Looking to the east, the Dalai Lama watched with a mixture of satisfaction and apprehension the growing disintegration of China. His satisfaction was derived from the fact that Tibet would have far more to fear from a united and aggressive China than from a weak and divided one. It was

certainly doubtful whether there would be any possibility for Tibet to resist a strong armed aggression. But there was no great difficulty in resisting the attacks of local warlords and petty generals of western China.

On the other hand, he was also apprehensive. What was going on in China was not clear. Yuan Shih-Kai and the conservatives of Peking were being defeated and the revolutionary Kuomintang party in the south was streaming up north, swallowing half of China in its vigorous sweep. Though it was an emanation of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen and of his vague democratic ideas, the Kuomintang's march towards the north was directed mainly by Soviet agents under the direction of Borodin and Bluecher.

The Inmost One was just as amazed as everyone else in the world when a bold reversal by a new and promising general by the name of Chiang Kai-Shek shook off the Soviet supervision and transmuted the Kuomintang into an ultra-nationalist movement. Most Communist agents were killed or chased out of China and a new central government established itself in Nanking. But who were those Soviet agents and what new ideology were they fighting for? The God-King wanted to know the meaning of this drastic revolution which had destroyed the Czar and the mighty Russian Empire only six years after the Manchu Empire had crumbled. Would this new ideology spill over the border of Siberia and drown part of Asia?

The Dalai Lama's past friendship with Dorjieff and the support he had once hoped for from Russia were sufficient reason to warrant a deep interest in the fate of the great Slav nation. This interest was greatly increased when Communism started spilling over the Russian border into Mongolia and splashed upon his misbehaving spiritual brother, the Hutuktu of Urga.

In the early twenties, a large section of Siberia under the direction of Admiral Koltchak was still fighting the Russian Communist armies. But the admiral's resistance was gradually weakening and soon appeared to be hopeless.

As the White Russian armies were being driven progressively towards the Pacific, some of their units sought refuge over the border, in Mongolia. Acting in conjunction with the Russian Communists, the Chinese had, meanwhile, re-established their authority over Mongolia, crushing the nationalist revolt of those Mongols who tried to take advantage of China's disintegration. They arrested Djebtsung Damba Hutuktu Khan, the Living Buddha of Urga, and deprived him of all political power. This Living Buddha was a Tibetan, having been born in the small village lying at the foot of the Potala. His fate, therefore, was of special interest to the God-King of Tibet in spite of their numerous quarrels during his exile in Urga.

When the White Russians entered Mongolia in 1921 under the direction of the fabulous adventurer Baron Unberg von Sternberg, they drove the Chinese out of the country, replaced the Living Buddha on his throne and proclaimed the independence of Mongolia. Urga became a White Russian base and the mad baron reformed his army with the help of the Mongols. This interregnum did not last long; Admiral Koltchak was captured by the Russian Reds and executed, while Unberg von Sternberg was decisively beaten and his army destroyed. The Russian Communists pursued the fleeing White Russians over the border and invaded Mongolia.

Caught between the simultaneous convulsions and upheavals of its two powerful neighbours, Mongolia's precarious independence was quickly drowned and the land of Genghis Khan finally fell under the sway of Moscow. The Living

Buddha died of syphilis in 1924 and under the name of Mongolian People's Republic, a new Soviet state was set up in Outer Mongolia, north of the Gobi Desert. Urga became Ulan Bator (Red Warrior) and the Communists began to crush lamaism methodically. Living Buddhas were killed or imprisoned, monasteries were destroyed, monks unfrocked and put to work. The Dalai Lama's secret agents in Outer Mongolia reported the increasing oppression by the Reds and their ruthless methods.

However, that part of the country which lies south of the Gobi Desert and is called Inner Mongolia remained out of the new Soviet state. Divided into a certain number of *banners* or groups of tribes, the inhabitants of Inner Mongolia were still autonomous under Chinese rule and remained free to practise their religion. They looked to Lhasa for spiritual leadership, all the more so now that Urga had disappeared as a religious centre. Their pilgrimages to Lhasa and financial contributions to the Dalai Lama strengthened the bonds which united both Mongols and Tibetans. But Inner Mongolia suffered a great deal from the Chinese who seized part of its territory, chased out the nomadic Mongols and settled Chinese farmers in their stead. Prince Teh Wang, the chief of the greatest banner and most influential man in Inner Mongolia, said to Charles Bell:

"The Chinese treat the Mongols as wild animals. They have sent up thieves and robbers who steal the Mongol's land. They are doing the same in Tibet (provinces of Kham and Amdo in eastern Tibet) . . . . . . Tibetans, Mongols and Turkis should establish independent states which should work in close relationship with each other. We shall have to rely on the Japanese to help us against the Chinese. They are far from desirable but the Reds (Soviets) are impossible."

The Communists, or *Balchebuks* as they are known in Tibet,

began to appear as a greater if more distant menace to Tibet than the Chinese themselves. The Dalai Lama watched their progress with apprehension and in his political testament warned his subjects sternly and somewhat naïvely:

"The present is the time of the five kinds of degeneration in all countries. In the worst class is the manner of working among the Red people (USSR). They do not allow search to be made for the new Incarnation of the Grand Lama of Urga. They have seized and taken away all the sacred objects from the monasteries. They have made monks to work as soldiers. Have you heard of all these things that have happened at Urga? And they are still continuing. It may happen that here in the centre of Tibet, the religion and the secular administration may be attacked both from the outside and from the inside . . . . . . All beings will be sunk in great hardship and in overpowering fear; the days and nights will drag on slowly in suffering. Do not become traitors to Church and State by working for another country against your own. Tibet is happy and in comfort now. The matter rests in your own hands."

The Dalai Lama's survey went on. He watched Japan, a small, unimportant archipelago when he was enthroned in the nineties. Now it had become a powerful empire and it was to a certain extent a kindred Buddhist nation. Secretly it helped the Mongols to continue their struggle against the Soviets.

As British India had definitely refused to allow Tibet to import arms and ammunition, Tsarong Shape, the war minister, advised the Dalai Lama to apply to Japan. Having followed his advice, the God-King received large consignments of arms from Tokyo. The amazing progress of the mystical Japanese stupefied the Tibetans. Better than any other

Asiatic nation, they had been able to absorb and turn to their own advantage the new industrial civilization which was wrecking the rest of the great continent. If it had been a question of choosing between the Reds and the ambitious Nipponese in the twenties, Lhasa would not have hesitated one instant.

The Vice-Regent of Buddha was a realist. He did not want his country to become part of the League of Nations and lose its neutrality. He felt that it would do no good:

"If the Chinese should threaten to invade Tibet, would the League of Nations help Tibet?" He knew the answer.

A thorn in Tibet's side was Nepal. Relations between both countries had never been good. Though there are many Buddhists in Nepal, the Gurkhas are mainly Hindus, very proud of their military traditions and contemptuous of pacifists—Tibetans, Indians and Chinese alike. Incidents always ocurred along their mutual border in spite of British efforts to settle their disputes and since the Maharaja of Nepal's refusal to help him during his exile in India, the Inmost One had felt a deep hostility towards the Gurkhas. But Nepal, though unpleasant, was a small country; it could hardly threaten the Roof of the World.

Far away towards the north, beyond the unexplored and frozen Chang Tang highlands where even Tibetans cannot live, beyond the unknown Kuen Lun mountain range, Chinese Turkestan or Sinkiang has little contact with Tibet.

Sinkiang's population of four to five million is mainly made up from Moslem Turkis who have no love to spare for the Chinese. Separated from Soviet Central Asia by the high peaks of the Tien Shan mountains, living in strings of oases lying on both sides of the desert of Taklamakan, the uneducated Turkis had been very much isolated from the out-

side world and had suffered from the thinly veiled contempt of Chinese mandarins and traders. In the past, Sinkiang was partly under the rule of the Mongol Chungkar tribe and partly under the rule of Moslem Turkis Emirs until it was conquered in the eighteenth century by Emperor Chien Lung's Chinese armies. Chien Lung absorbed this huge chunk of land and brought it under Chinese administration at the time when he established the ambans in Lhasa and the Chinese protectorate over Tibet. Though Turki and its Arabic script were the medium of expression of the vast majority of the population, Chinese became the only official language.

Following the disintegration of China and the downfall of the empire, Sinkiang had become in fact, if not in name, independent. In Urumchi, the capital city, a Chinese dictator ruled Turkestan with an iron hand, ignoring both China and the Soviets. The strong Moslem faith of the Turkis did not predispose them to become Communists and Soviet agents soon discovered that it was very difficult to make converts to Marxism out of them. The newborn independence of the neighbouring Moslem states of Samarkande, Bokhara, Tashkent, and Kokand in Russian Turkestan had been smashed by the Red Russians. The strong resistence movement of the *bas-matchis* had started soon after, a resistance which was going to last for more than twenty years. Moslem refugees from the Soviet terror streamed over the passes of the Tien Shan mountains and their tales of Communist atrocities did not help Soviet propaganda in any way.

Moscow gave up the idea of utilizing the rising tide of anti-Chinese nationalism among the Turkis and went to work on the small Chinese community which makes up less than six per cent of the population, but still held the reality of power in their hands.

The only part of Sinkiang which is really in contact with Tibet is the south-west and there, in Khotan, Yarkand and Kashgar, Britain's friendly influence was still strong. The powerful British consulate in Kashgar was an outpost of the Indian Empire and was always ready to check any hostile movement towards the south and the passes of the Pamirs leading down into India or up to western Tibet.

Tibet had not yet any cause for alarm in the political evolution of Sinkiang.

Once more, the God-King of Tibet turned his attention towards China. He had made it perfectly clear that with the downfall of the Manchu Empire, Tibet's political connections with China were broken. The Tibetan viewpoint was that the Imperial Crown of Peking was the only link between the two countries, similar in every respect to the British Crown to which several independent dominions owe common allegiance. Suppress the Crown and the various nations have no political link.

But the Chinese never relented in their imperialistic effort. Chinese troops occupied a large slice of eastern Tibet and proceeded to take away the inhabitants' self-government, establishing in fact a colonial administration over their Tibetan subjects. One must not lose sight of the fact that the border regions between Tibet and China had never really been controlled by either Lhasa or Peking. A large number of small semi-independent states, most of them recognizing the nominal suzerainty of Lhasa because their inhabitants were of Tibetan stock and language, enjoyed complete autonomy. Some of them, such as the kingdoms of Batang and Derge had been abolished by the Chinese when Chao Erh-Feng marched on Lhasa in 1906–1909; others were absorbed by the Tibetans and brought under Lhasa's direct administration, sometimes

as late as 1927 in the case of the fertile and prosperous Kingdom of Po whose ruler fled to India. The difficult delimitation of a precise border between Tibet and China was, in fact, a gradual and parallel absorption of intermediate states by both countries until their administrations met. Their common border finally crystallized along the steep banks of the upper Yangtze River, a frontier which Tibet has been able to hold with a small army ever since. The important town of Chamdo became the headquarters of the eastern Tibetan army while Batang became the advanced base of the Chinese troops from Szechwan. All the area lying between the Yangtze and Tachienlu in the east, was taken over from the Tibetans and incorporated into Szechwan.

Tibet lost another great chunk of territory in the north-east. The governor of Kansu Province pushed his Moslem-Chinese troops from Lake Koko Nor across the Amne Machin mountain range up to the town of Jeykundo which became the seat of the Kansu warlord's western troops. Opposite him, the Tibetans maintained their north-eastern army in the area of Nagchuka and protected Tibet's border which runs north from the upper Yangtze River and ends in the unexplored marshes of the Tsaidam.

In order to understand the potential danger to Tibet from the east, one must realize that Tibet, including the provinces of Kham and Amdo, has an estimated population of three or four million people, whereas the Chinese province of Szechwan exceeds fifty million alone. This potential danger, however, was nullified by the increasing civil wars and the growing anarchy in China. Kansu and Szechwan had become virtually independent states under their local warlords and were too weak to threaten Tibet. It is estimated that Szechwan alone suffered from more than two hundred civil wars in twenty years! At the same time, however, the

Tibetan's desire for a definite settlement was permanently frustrated.

What was happening at home, meanwhile? In 1921, Sir Charles Bell was invited to go up to Lhasa where he remained as a guest of the Dalai Lama for several months. British influence in Tibet was at its peak in those days. The telegraph line to Gyangtse which had been set up during the Younghusband expedition was extended to Lhasa. Trade between both countries had improved considerably and the influence of Tsarong Shape, a favourite of the Dalai Lama and the most consistently pro-British Tibetan, was paramount in Lhasa.

But the British-Tibetan honeymoon was soon over. In about 1925, the Inmost One turned away from British India towards China. Tsarong lost his influence and was degraded; most subsequent British requests were turned down. The British school in Gyangtse was closed in 1925 and British political agents could not obtain permission to go to Lhasa. Without becoming hostile towards India, the Tibetans felt that the British would not defend them in case of trouble in central Asia and that they would have to fend for themselves in the political tornadoes which were raging around the Roof of the World. Tibet had nothing to lose by becoming cooler towards the British and, without giving up her claims to independence in any way, in trying to reach an understanding with China.

It was obvious that sooner or later, Communism would become interested in Tibet. In 1927, a strong Soviet-Mongol mission arrived in Lhasa, sent on orders from Moscow to explore the possibilities of Marxist penetration in Tibet. They spread money around, took photographs of all the strategic

passes and fortified positions, promising military help to Tibet in case of trouble with the British or the Chinese. They spent six months in Lhasa and were replaced by a clever Soviet-Mongol agent who remained for more than a year in the Forbidden City; he became quite friendly with many leading Tibetans, giving them many details of the happy life of the people in Soviet Mongolia and their contempt for the deceased Grand Lama of Urga. He was received by the Dalai Lama himself, in private interview. Strange encounter it must have been between the fanatical apostle of Marxism and the God-King of Tibet!

The Dalai Lama was simply curious to know more about the Soviets and what they stood for. He was perfectly aware that Communism was still an incomprehensible doctrine for most of his subjects and that there was no danger of a serious infiltration as long as he checked on the activities of Soviet emissaries.

The Inmost One had a fantastic network of secret agents all over Asia, especially in India, Outer Mongolia and China. He was perhaps the best informed man in the entire Asiatic continent and his very quick intelligence digested with the greatest of ease this mass of confidential information. His former travels and wanderings enabled him to grasp the political problems of other nations, often better than the leading politicians of those lands.

In 1930, the Soviets lost interest for a time in the Far East. Coinciding with their defeat in China after Chiang Kai-Shek's abrupt change of position, Mao Tse-Tung's accession as undisputed leader of Chinese Communism and Japan's increasing activities on the Asiatic mainland, Moscow understood that a genuine Asiatic Communism would have to grow by itself without too much open support from the USSR. The Russians reverted for a time to a

national policy of self-defence against the Japanese encroachments and became only interested in considerations of military strategy. Tibet was too far away and of too little strategic value at a time when military aviation was still in its infancy and long-range bombing a dream of the future. The Roof of the World's impracticability to land armies was so great that the Soviets gave up, temporarily, all ideas of infiltrating Tibet.

But under Chiang Kai-Shek's leadership, China gave renewed signs of interest. In 1930, a Tibetan resident of Peking who held the rank of *dzasa*, arrived in Lhasa with a message from the Chinese central government in Nanking. The Kuomintang sought to establish friendlier relations with Tibet and admitted, with apologies, its lack of control over the warlords of the border. The God-King, anxious to convey the impression that he believed in the sincerity of the Chinese, replied very favourably and started leaning increasingly if cautiously towards the great neighbour of the east.

The Thirteenth Dalai Lama had worked harder than any Asiatic ruler. He was a complete autocrat but under his iron grip Tibet was prosperous and peaceful. The administration increased in size and efficiency. Justice became milder but firmer at the same time. He had preserved Tibet's independence by playing off cleverly the British against the Chinese. But the Inmost One was getting old and tired. A young favourite of his, charming and ambitious Thubden Künpel La, became in time the most powerful man in Lhasa, building up in the process a large fortune and a pyramid of envious enemies. He helped the ruler in his colossal work and persuaded him to import a motor car in which the Dalai Lama used to ride every day. The progressive Inmost One wished to introduce more technical gadgets

in his country but he wanted to do this slowly, knowing perfectly well what an abrupt introduction of all the trimmings of the industrial age could do to the minds of most of his subjects.

Towards the end of 1931, the State Oracle of Nechung predicted that the Dalai Lama was going to die very soon and the Inmost One prepared himself to go to the "Honourable Field." He wrote his long political testament which he ended with this very broad-minded advice to his subjects:

"Be all of one mind and work with zeal to the best of your ability, as in the old days. That in itself will constitute a religious service; there is no need for you to perform any other religious services."

In November 1933, the Inmost One, feeling that the end was near, summoned a Nepalese photographer to take a last picture of him. Shortly afterward, the highest Living Buddha on earth died and passed out of his Thirteenth Incarnation.

In Tibetan history, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama now ranks equal in importance with the Great Fifth. His iron hand ruled the Roof of the World with just firmness and it was not long before his departure was bitterly regretted by all Tibetans.

CHAPTER XVII

AFTERMATH

IN THE FASCINATING task to which I gave myself up during a large part of my sojourn in Lhasa, of piecing together the conflicting bits of information about Tibet's recent history, I went from the archives which the government of India maintained in Dekyi Lingka to interviews, not only with the leading Tibetans but also with Major Bahadur Bista, the smiling representative of Nepal, with the consul of Ladak and the Moslems of Lhasa, with the private representatives of several Chinese warlords of the border provinces and, last but by no means least, with Mr. Chen, the distinguished Chinese ambassador. Mr. Hsi-Chang Chen called himself the high commissioner of the Chinese protectorate over Tibet; he was not appointed by the Chinese Foreign Department but by the Nanking Commission for Tibetan and Mongolian Affairs. To the Tibetan government, he was nothing more than the diplomatic representative of a foreign country.

Mr. Chen lived in a fairly large house near the bazaar. Wearing with great elegance a blue silk gown, Mr. Chen always greeted me in his Chinese drawing-room with a large smile, flashing the most perfect set of white teeth that I have ever seen. The Chinese are never very keen on letting western foreigners come up to Tibet. My presence was not pleasing to Mr. Chen but, his political influence in Lhasa being nil, there was nothing he could do about it. The best he could achieve was to try and persuade me that Tibetans

were a colonial people, unfit for self-rule and still part of the Chinese dominions.

As he had never stooped to the disgrace of learning a barbarian's language, Mr. Chen was always assisted by Mr. Shen Chi Liu, the young American-speaking first secretary at the embassy. Holding a cup of green tea with the long and delicate fingers of an old mandarin, Mr. Chen explained through Mr. Liu's poetically worded translation the Chinese viewpoint on Tibet.

Later on, I pored over documents to try and sort out of these baffling contradictions the truth about Tibet, a truth which became more elusive as I reached the death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and the period of the Second World War. Nevertheless, the extraordinary tale of Tibet's medieval life in the twentieth century gradually emerged, often intimately mixed with the political evolution of China and Central Asia but sometimes as remote as if it were in the moon. And so, let us return to Lhasa on the day after the self-perpetuating Dalai Lama passed out of his Thirteenth Incarnation.

The body of the God-King of Tibet was embalmed by the process of cooking in butter and salting. His face was painted with gold and the Holy Mummy remained in state in a shrine of the Potala Palace. Thousands of Tibetans streamed past the catafalque and prayed that his soul should not linger too long in the "Honourable Field" but reincarnate itself as soon as possible. They all felt that Tibet had become a rudderless ship.

While the official peciod of mourning of three weeks was in progress, while men took off their turquoise earrings and woman their jewels, while singing, dancing and entertaining were prohibited and thousands of butter-lamps were kept

burning day and night on the flat rooftops of Lhasa, the ex-favourite Künpel La assumed supreme political power. He had, however, too many enemies in Tibet and he was quickly deposed by the all-powerful National Assembly. Arrested, imprisoned and tried by the Parliament, he was locked up in a monastery of the oriental province of Kongpo and his vast wealth was confiscated. But through his persuasive charm and great cleverness he managed to be unanimously elected abbot by the lamas of the monastery. He was then free to escape to Bhutan and eventually turned up in Kalimpong where he went to work as manager of a warehouse. Chinese agents contacted him immediately and offered him asylum and wealth if he were willing to go to China. They wanted to utilize him as they had tried to use the Panchen Lama in order to increase the internal divisions of Tibet. But Künpel La patriotically refused.

Meanwhile, the Panchen Rimpoche who was still in exile in China had a change of heart. He wrote in one of his letters to Charles Bell:

"The passing of the Dalai Lama has caused great grief to all beings and especially to me whose sole place of trust he was. He was my priest-teacher, his knowledge and capacity were beyond my power of description, but now he has gone. I am making offerings in the monasteries of China and Mongolia that the new Incarnation may come quickly with the face of the white moon. For this reason I have sent my priest-officer of the fourth rank, Serkang, and a lay official to make offering of butter-lamps on the altars of monasteries."

He added at the end:

"I hope to return to Tibet at no distant date." Death, unfortunately for him, came earlier and deprived the Panchen Rimpoche of the pleasure of seeing his native land again.

A Chinese mission arrived in Lhasa in 1934. The chief of the mission, General Huang Mu-Sung, was instructed by the Kuomintang to find means of bringing Tibet back under Nanking's authority and of reinstating Chinese power in Lhasa. However, the Tibetan parliament was overwhelmingly anti-Chinese and defeated the mission's purpose. With or without the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Tibet was now strong enough and sufficiently conscious of its independent nationhood to resist all attempts by the Kuomintang to re-create Chinese colonial rule over the Roof of the World.

Before dying, the Dalai Lama had designated as the regent after his death the twenty-three-years-old trülku of Reting Monastery: Thubden Jampel Yishey Gyantsen. The National Assembly endorsed this choice two months after the ruler's death and the young Reting Rimpoche, a high spirited but nervous and ambitious man, became ruler of Tibet.

All was not well in Lhasa meanwhile. The disappearance of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's iron fist gave the impression to potential trouble makers that the time was ripe for political plots. A certain amount of confusion was put down by the joint efforts of the Prime Minister Yapshi Langdun Kung and the Parliament; a stable government was finally produced which cancelled many of the progressive reforms made by the late ruler. His motor-car was relegated to a garage in the Potala and never used again. It is now a pile of rusty junk.

In external matters, Lhasa was cautious and careful to follow a line of strict neutrality. The Tibetans had to agree, finally, to let a Chinese mission establish itself in Lhasa with all the necessary equipment—wireless station, printing press, Chinese schools, armed guard and so on. Piqued, the British asked and obtained the right to establish a British-Indian mission in Lhasa as an offshoot of the Gyangtse trade agency and the first British chief of mission settled down in 1936.

This did not prevent the Chinese from being troublesome again.

War between Tibet and local Chinese warlords in western China had broken out again in 1932. At a time when the Nanking régime was consolidating its position and when the anti-communist campaign of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek was in full swing, the independent warlord of western Szechwan attacked the Tibetan army on the upper Yangtze and defeated it decisively. Man to man, the tough Tibetan soldier is far superior to the south-western Chinese and in the early twenties Tibetan troops were often victorious even though they were greatly outnumbered by their opponents. But in 1932 the Tibetans were crushed under the superiority of Chinese armament and they had to retreat swiftly. Karma however was working for them and civil war broke out in Szechwan; the Szechwanese warlord had to halt his offensive and recall his troops to face the new threat in his rear.

In spite of its lack of political control over western China, the Nanking central government decided to consolidate Chinese gains in eastern Tibet. The Kuomintang carved two new provinces out of these Tibetan-populated areas: western Kansu and Amdo province (north-east Tibet) became the province of Tsinghai. Western Szechwan and eastern Kham (south-east Tibet) became Sikang. By making these changes the Nanking government officially recognized the territorial gains made by Chinese warlords at the expense of Tibet.

The governors of these new provinces were both semi-independent generals and great characters in their own right, though very different from one another. Marshal Liu Wen-Hui, governor of Sikang, and chief of a powerful clan in Szechwan, was primarily interested in trading and making a fortune for himself. A devout Buddhist and very friendly

with the lamaist clergy of eastern Tibet, he decided that the best policy for him would be to ignore Nanking's imperialistic ambitions and remain on good terms with Lhasa. Peace was restored and profitable trade was resumed between Tibet on the one hand, Sikang, Szechwan and Yunnan on the other.

General Ma Pu-Fang, the governor of Tsinghai, was a different personality altogether. In order to understand his position, we have to recall the amazing story of the strong group of Chinese Moslems who have gradually spread over Ninghsia, Kansu and parts of Szechwan and who form today a solid, united and autonomous block of fifteen million men in the north-west corner of China.

Islam's dynamic religion started spreading all over Asia in the seventh century A.D., conquering large countries and converting many races. The great plains of central Asia west and east of the Tien Shan Mountains were populated by numerous warlike tribes of Turkish stock who adopted this new religion and became fanatical Moslems. Driving west, towards Anatolia, they founded the Ottoman Empire. Driving east, they pushed deeply into China and many a Chinese emperor trembled in front of their khans as much as they did in front of the Mongols. Some, such as the Ouigours, were invited by Chinese emperors to take part in Chinese civil wars and in reward were allowed to settle down in western China on the old silk road to the west.

Numerous Chinese were converted to Islam and, intermarrying with the Turkis, eventually founded a type of Moslem Chinese different from both the Moslem Turkis of Sinkiang and the rest of the Chinese people. They settled down in the north-west of the Celestial Empire, in a group of provinces which is astride the great trade route from

Tibet to Mongolia, thus severing the large community of Buddhist-Lamaist countries.

Therefore, Islam had established itself strongly around Tibet in one gigantic green crescent stretching from Kashmir through Sinkiang down to the heart of China. The Moslem Chinese, the *huis*, had the same desire for autonomy under the local leadership of their priestly *ahuns* which the other races, Tibetans, Turkis and Mongols, had for independence. The disintegration of China after the downfall of the Manchu dynasty finally produced a strong semi-independent Moslem power in the north-west under the leadership of an ambitious Moslem family—the Mas or Big Horses. The four principal Mas ruled the provinces of Ninghsia, Tsinghai and slices of Kansu and Shensi. Two of them gradually emerged as great war leaders—ruthless Ma Pu-Fang who became governor of Tsinghai and ponderous Ma Hung-Kwei who dominated Ninghsia. Man to man, their soldiers became the best in China and they had over the other Chinese one great advantage: they had a faith, a fanatical belief in a religion which made them impervious to the increasing propaganda of the Communists.

Marxist power in China had become something to reckon with and in Lhasa the Tibetan government saw looming on the horizon something which appeared to be more dangerous to the independence of their country than mere Chinese imperialism. They saw a new political faith, a Communist religion, which was pouring into the moral and religious vacuum which China had become after the disintegration of its refined civilization and empire.

Chiang Kai-Shek's sudden about-face in 1927 had by no means disposed of the Marxist problem in China. Though the Chinese Communist party had gone through a severe crisis and split in 1929, the flight to Moscow of Li-San, who was

the advocate of the urban proletariat revolution, left Mao Tse-Tung, the apostle of the agrarian reform, firmly in the Marxist saddle. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, an honest and sincere mixture of Methodism and Confucianism, was stubborn, narrow-minded and too sure of himself. He embarked on a war of extermination against the Communists, a war which he had to conduct while attempting at the same time to hold the Japanese in check and subdue the independent warlords.

In 1934 occurred one of the most remarkable military campaigns in the history of Asia—the "Long March" of the Communist armies from their base in Fukien and Kwangsi provinces to their future capital of Yenan in Shensi. This fantastic march of more than six thousand miles through jungles, swamps, deserts, without any mechanized transport, fighting against an enemy far superior in numbers, is certainly an epic worthy of admiration. Unfortunately their ruthless behaviour, especially during their brief passage through eastern Tibet, was far less commendable.

After having outwitted Chiang Kai-Shek's generals and allied warlords, the Communist army forded the difficult Tatu River and penetrated into Tibetan territory or, as the Kuomintang would call it, into Sikang and western Szechwan, where the Roof of the World slopes down gradually towards the lower plains of China. They committed incredible atrocities along with heroic military feats, slaughtered peaceful Chinese and Tibetans, killed monks, looted and destroyed lamaseries. For the first time, Tibetans co-operated with Chinese nationalists against a worse enemy—the Red invasion. Frantic Liu Wen-Hui, the future governor of Sikang, received all the help he needed from Lhasa during his struggle against Chu Teh who was in command of the Communist army. The Reds remained for more than a year

in eastern Tibet, without making their usual converts, oppressing the Tibetans as they had never been oppressed by the Chinese before; later on, even the Marxist leaders had to apologize for these atrocities.

Another part of the Red army struck north under the command of Mao Tse-Tung, Chou En-Lai and Lin Piao. They went through the most dangerous part of the entire Long March, along the huge unexplored steppes and jungles which lie on the border between Tibet and China. Very near the unexplored territory of the ferocious Tibetan Goloks, they went through the equally unknown country of the Mantzus. In *Red Star Over China*, Edgar Snow describes this amazing episode:

"A few hundred yards on either side of the road, however, it was quite unsafe. Many a Red who ventured to forage for a sheep never returned. The mountaineers hid in the thick bush and sniped at the marching 'invaders.' They climbed the mountains and when the Reds filed through the deep, narrow rock passes, where sometimes only one or two could pass abreast, the Mantzu rolled huge boulders down to crush them and their animals. Here were no chances to explain 'Red policy towards National minorities,' no opportunities for friendly alliances! The Mantzu queen had an implacable, traditional hatred for Chinese of any variety and recognized no distinctions between Red and White. She threatened to boil alive anyone who helped the travellers."

The Communists lost almost half their men during this ordeal and, exhausted, they finally reached their future dwelling place in northern Shansi and eastern Kansu, east of the Moslem territory which they would eventually recognize as being one of the hardest nuts to crack in the whole of China. But they did not forget their passage through eastern Tibet and a few years later Mao Tse-Tung told Edgar Snow humorously:

"That is our only foreign debt and some day we must pay the Mantzu and the Tibetans for the provisions we were obliged to take from them." The Tibetans shudder to think of how the Chinese Communists would repay this "debt"!

Meanwhile a new element entered the already complex Chinese puzzle—Japan.

Lhasa had seen the progressive transformation of Japan into a world power without too many misgivings. The mystic Nipponese had always been a mixture of Buddhist and Shintoist. From time to time one of them, Kawaguchi for example, came to Tibet in order to study in a monastery. Though the Tibetans tried to apply to them the same strict rules of exclusion which they applied to all foreigners, they got on better with the religious Japanese than with the rational Chinese.

In 1931, a Japanese army occupied the whole of Manchuria and set up the new vassal state of Manchukuo. In 1933, the Japanese occupied the province of Jehol which opened the way to Inner Mongolia. Then came General Doihara's policy of detachment of the five northern provinces of China which succeeded in 1935 in establishing the Hopei-Chahar Political Council under Japan's tight control. In 1936, Tokyo sent a Manchukuoan army into the province of Suiyuan but suffered a defeat.

At this precise moment occurred Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek's kidnapping in Sian and his ensuing conversion to an anti-Japanese policy. The consequent stiffening of the Chinese attitude prompted the Japanese to start in 1937 their undeclared war which was to last until 1945.

During this period, the whole of Inner Mongolia was taken by Japan's Kwantung army and satellite states were set up in Chahaar, Suiyuan and north Shensi. In Ninghsia

the Japanese finally encountered the strong resistance of Ma Hung-Kwei's Moslem Chinese and stopped dead in their tracks. South of the Japanese-Moslem Chinese front lay the territory of the Chinese Communists who were thus completely cut off from Soviet Russia and Soviet Mongolia. Prince Teh Wang who was a sincere Mongol patriot became the Chairman of the "federated autonomous government of Inner Mongolia" and his violent anti-Chinese feelings prompted him to become a vassal of the Japanese. The primary responsibility for this lay with the Kuomintang's policy of confiscation and oppression of the Mongols.

The USSR, meanwhile, had apparently given up the idea of helping the Chinese Communists who were to remain on their own during the entire war against Japan. The Soviets had also given up, temporarily, the idea of infiltrating Tibet after the failure of the 1927–28 mission. They concentrated on consolidating their hold over Soviet Mongolia with which they concluded a treaty of alliance in 1934. Economically and socially, the Mongols were allowed far more freedom than the people of the USSR proper and a certain degree of private capitalism was permitted. This thinly populated state of less than a million inhabitants was governed by the Great Huruldan, or Peoples' Assembly, and the leading personality was the dour Marshal Choy Balsan whose tough Mongol army was more than a match for Japan's Manchukuoan troops. All traces of Buddhism-Lamaism seemed to have disappeared from this formerly religious country and its highest Living Buddha, the Diluwa Hutuktu, lived in exile in China.

But further west, in Sinkiang (Chinese Turkestan), great changes had been brought about and the new Soviet policy of working on the Chinese ruling minority rather than on

the nationalism of the Turki majority was bearing fruit. In 1934, Soviet intervention in Urumchi, the capital, had established a strong pro-Soviet provincial government under the Chinese general, Sheng Shih-Tsai. Red army troops were stationed in northern Sinkiang and Soviet technicians seized control of the administration and the exploitation of all natural resources. Most of the province's trade was directed towards the USSR where the Turk-Sib railway had just been completed west of the Tien-Shan Mountains. Alarmed, the British-Indians directed Moslem revolts from Kashgar (southern Sinkiang) so as to keep Soviet influence from reaching the Pamirs and the Indian border. Tibet, protected from the rest of Chinese Turkestan by the huge, inaccessible and unexplored Kuen Lun Mountains, was not too worried by this abrupt change in Sinkiang.

The war with Japan was going from bad to worse for the Chinese. Peking, Nanking, Shanghai and Canton fell one after the other. The entire coast line was occupied by the invaders and the Chinese nationalists were gradually pushed towards the interior, towards the west. The Chinese government was finally transferred to Chungking which was uncomfortably close to Tibet.

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek settled down in Chungking for a long war with Japan. But the stubborn generalissimo had not given up the rest of his programme. He had lost not only the most valuable part of China but also the outlying portions of the former Manchu Empire—Manchuria, the Mongolias, Sinkiang and Tibet. War or no war with Japan, he intended to get them back as soon as possible and he waited patiently for the Second World War which would drag all the great powers into the struggle. Japan would then be partly taken off his hands and he would be free to reassert his hold over central Asia—over Tibet.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RETURN AND THE WAR

DURING THIS PERIOD of convulsions in central Asia and the Far East, Tibet was concentrating on its main task: locating the young boy in whom the permanent soul of the Dalai Lama had chosen to be reborn. There is no time limit set for the rebirth and the Western belief that the young boy has to be born on the day of his predecessor's death is incorrect. He can and he has been in the past reborn up to a year or eighteen months later.

The means used for this discovery are numerous and complicated, all of them based more or less on the psychic powers of oracles and trülkus. In 1935, Reting Rimpoche, the regent, visited a famous lake called the Victoria Wheel of Religion in which the soul of the Dalai Lama is supposed to reside between his incarnations. Lakes are the crystal balls of Tibet and he found it easier to concentrate when looking at the mirror-like waters; whatever psychic powers he had were more smoothly put to work in the majestic silence of a lake shore than in Lhasa. The regent saw three letters: *Ah Ka Ma*, the first one of which was believed to refer to the province of Amdo in north-east Tibet (Chinese province of Tsinghai). He also saw a three-storeyed lamasery, covered with a golden roof speckled with turquoise tiles, as well as a winding road nearby, leading to a small farmhouse of a type which was unknown to Lhasa people.

Other signs were found in a change of position of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's corpse in his sarcophagus and in the directions of rainbows.

Many searching parties had already failed to locate any incarnation when an expedition was sent to Tsinghai province on the advice of the oracle of Samye, advice which was given during one of his trances. When the large caravan reached Jeykundo, headquarters of Ma Pu-Fang's western Moslem army, the members of the party met the exiled Panchen Lama who was about to die and who gave them the names of three young boys, one of whom might very well be the object of their search.

The first one died when they arrived, the second ran away crying when shown a collection of personal objects having belonged to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. When the expedition reached the location of the third, the members were amazed to find that the house and surrounding landscape fitted perfectly the description given by the regent during his visit to the prophetic lake. Kyi-Tsang, the Phantom Body who headed the expedition and described the search to me in great detail, decided to switch positions with one of his subordinates, disguising himself as a lay servant. When they entered the farm's kitchen, a young boy rushed towards the disguised Kyi-Tsang and cried, "Lama, lama." Interrogated in the dialect of Amdo, the four-year-old boy gave the correct title and residence of every member of the party, whether disguised or not.

Later on, the personal objects of the late Dalai Lama were spread out on the floor, mixed with perfect copies of them. The boy picked up all the personal objects of the late ruler and left aside all the copies. On his body were found three physical marks which are supposed to be apparent on every incarnation of god Chen-Re-Zi.

Kyi-Tsang was convinced that the young Pa-M Ton-Trup was the genuine Incarnation he was looking for and accordingly sent his report to Lhasa in the summer of 1938.

He was instructed, in reply, to bring the boy to Lhasa for further tests. The Tibetan government, in fact, felt sure that the real Incarnation had been found at last but, as he was in Chinese territory, Lhasa thought it safer not to acknowledge it too early. The reasons were self-evident.

In spite of Lhasa's caution, General Ma Pu-Fang became extremely suspicious and refused to let the boy depart unless he was immediately proclaimed to be the Dalai Lama. Then, overcome by a sense of financial greed, he relented and asked for payment of a sum equivalent to 30,000 American dollars, which he received. The boy was allowed to proceed as far as the great lamasery of Kum-Bum, near the shores of Lake Koko Nor and still in Chinese territory. There, the expedition was again stopped and Ma Pu-Fang's blackmail went on, strongly encouraged by the Chinese central government who did not want to lose this trump card against Tibet. He asked for a further 100,000 dollars, which Kyi-Tsang unfortunately did not possess.

The negotiations dragged on for more than a year. Finally, Kyi-Tsang was able to borrow from a group of wealthy Moslem merchants the necessary amount and the Tibetan expedition started on the return journey. When the Lhasa government was advised that the boy was at last in Tibetan territory, a solemn meeting was held in the Potala and he was proclaimed to be the true Incarnation of god Chen-Re-Zi. In September 1939, the expedition arrived in Nagchuka, several days' march north of Lhasa. It was met by a cabinet minister, several high officials and the golden palanquin of the Dalai Lama. A colourful enthronement ceremony in an improvised camp followed the meeting; the cabinet minister prostrated himself three times in front of Tibet's new ruler and presented him with a document from the regent acknowledging him as the rightful Incarnation.

During the following Tibetan New Year, in February 1940, a solemn ceremony of enthronement took place in the Potala, under the eyes of hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and of delegates from all over the Buddhist world. The young boy then received his official name of:

"The Holy One, the Gentle Glory, Powerful in Speech, Pure in Mind, of Divine Wisdom, Holding the Faith Wide as the Ocean."

The Dalai Lama had returned.

Meanwhile, World War II had broken out in Europe, and, in Chungking, Chiang Kai-Shek was feeling closer to Tibet and also more interested in the future of the Roof of the World. His Chinese representative at the enthronement ceremony, Wu Chung-Hsin, was treated on an equal footing with Sir Basil Gould, the British envoy. Both were foreign ambassadors and considered as such by the Tibetans. But the Chinese Press sent out all over the world misleading reports showing the Chinese representative in the light of a high commissioner in a Chinese protectorate. Wu had escorted the Dalai Lama to his throne and announced his coronation—the Dalai Lama had thanked him and had prostrated himself. All this was complete nonsense, of course, but Tibet has no Press and no broadcasting station. How could Lhasa convey the truth to the rest of the world?

The Reting Rimpoche unwillingly stepped down from his official position as regent and returned, very much disgruntled, to Reting lamasery. He was disliked by the National Assembly and they were glad to be rid of him. In his place, they appointed as regent an old trülku of one of Lhasa's smaller monasteries—Nwang Sungrab Thutoh Galtsen, a serious and philosophically minded man with no earthly

ambitions, who occupied his new position with quiet dignity and courage.

This courage he was going to need pretty soon. The war was spreading all over the world and Tibet was going to be temporarily involved.

Soon after Pearl Harbour, the Japanese occupied the whole of south-east Asia and, invading Burma, eventually cut the famous Burma Road.

This was embarrassing to the allies as Chungking and Free China were now completely isolated from the rest of the world. The only link was the very costly and insufficient air-lift from Calcutta to Kunming over the inaccessible mountains and jungles of the Hump.

The allies decided to look for an alternative to the Burma Road, as the Soviets were too busy fighting off the Germans on their western front to be able to supply the Chinese through Turkestan. The only open land-communication left was through Tibet.

In September 1942, the Tibetan government granted permission to an American expedition headed by Lieutenant-Colonel Ilia Tolstoy to proceed to Lhasa and thence to China. The primary object of this mission was to find a new route through which supplies could be sent from India to China. A secondary object was to establish the first official contact between the American and the Tibetan governments.

When the American expedition arrived in Lhasa, Colonel Tolstoy handed to the Dalai Lama a letter and a signed photograph from President Roosevelt. The Americans stayed in Lhasa for several months and left the capital in the middle of March 1943, after having been assured by the Chinese that a detachment of Chinese soldiers would meet them on the border as escort against the numerous bandits along the

way. Though the Chinese escort never turned up, the American expedition reached Lanchow safe and sound in the summer of 1943, convinced not only that Tibet was an independent and well-ruled country, but also that its strategic importance was very great in an age of increasing air power.

Chiang Kai-Shek had not seen this sudden American interest in Tibet with pleasure. Coinciding with his alarm at this semi-recognition of Tibet's autonomy, the generalissimo was considering a vast manœuvre which would enable him, in the midst of a deadly war against Japan, to reassert his hold over central Asia and crush the dissidents of the interior, the Communists.

In 1938, as a result of the war with Japan, the Kuomintang and the Chinese Reds had concluded a truce, following which the Communist troops were integrated lock, stock and barrel in the Chinese National army under the name of "Eighth Route Army." But the truce was uneasy, all efforts of the Kuomintang to infiltrate and destroy the Communist power having failed. Worse than that, the Communists actually progressed and expanded, especially in Japanese-held territory. Chiang decided that the time had come to eliminate the rebel Marxists and internal warfare flared up again in Free China. The allies were hard put to stop it and their efforts succeeded in patching up temporarily an uneasy truce.

The generalissimo was more successful in Chinese Turkestan. General Sheng Shih-Tsai, governor of Sinkiang, who had been put in by the Soviets and had remained under their influence, was cleverly persuaded by Chungking to change his mind. The turncoat governor, taking advantage of the increasing difficulties and possible defeat of the Soviets in their war against Germany, expelled from Sinkiang all the Soviet

troops, advisers and technicians and threw into jail all the local Communists. Chiang Kai-Shek then expelled Sheng Shih-Tsai in his turn, replaced him with a more docile governor and took over the direct administration of Sinkiang. However, powerless as they were at the time, the Soviets played on the distaste of the Turkis for their Chinese overlords and a Kazak revolt, in the end of 1944, detached the three northernmost districts from Sinkiang. The Soviets, realizing how unreliable the Chinese were, had switched once more to a policy of encouraging Turki nationalism against Chinese colonial rule. In the rebel districts most Chinese were killed and the Illi régime, also called Republic of Eastern Turkestan, was set up. The only trouble for the Soviets was that the rebels were intensely Moslem and cared little for Marxism.

Chiang's partial success in Sinkiang was the best he was able to achieve during the war. The third part of his programme, which was his protracted tentative invasion against Tibet, ended in dismal failure.

He had sent strict orders in 1934 to the governors of Sikang and Tsinghai, Liu Wen-Hui and Ma Pu-Fang, to invade Tibet with their armed forces. Liu Wen-Hui, who was trading very profitably with Lhasa and who was becoming more mystical every day, refused flatly.

Ma Pu-Fang, more clever, accepted conditionally. He wanted arms and ammunition from Chungking. A large consignment of American arms, ammunition and equipment, flown at great cost over the Hump to help the Chinese in their war against Japan, was diverted and sent to Tsinghai for the purpose of waging war against a neutral and peaceful country. Ma Pu-Fang made a small pretence at invasion near Jeykundo, his headquarters on the Tibetan border. But the firm and courageous attitude of the Tibetan National

Assembly and of the regent put out of his mind any idea of a serious war if he had ever intended to launch one, which is extremely doubtful.

This was the last opportunity which the frustrated generalissimo had of putting in action his aggressive designs against Tibet. It was a lamentable failure and Chiang Kai-Shek's ensuing loss of face was a portent of far greater disasters for China in the immediate post-war period.

Before the end of hostilities with Japan, Chiang Kai-Shek published a book entitled *China's Destiny*. In this Oriental *Mein Kampf*, the generalissimo dealt not only with the internal reconstruction of his country but also expounded his imperialistic theories in great detail, especially his desire to recover all the countries and areas that had been "deeply influenced" in the past by Chinese civilization. One can see what this would lead to if applied by the would-be heirs to all the great civilizations of the world.

In this book, the generalissimo explains the Kuomintang's change of opinion as regards the old Celestial Empire and he writes:

"If only the Manchus could have done away with the boundaries that separated the Chinese, Manchus, Mongols, Mohammedans and Tibetans, and recognized that our five branches are, in fact, one unified body, it would have been hard to find fault with them."

In this sentence, the generalissimo denied the right of separate nationhood to Tibetans and other nations which were once part of the empire. More important still, Chiang Kai-Shek and the Kuomintang reversed their position as regards the Manchus, who had been thrown out of China during the revolution of 1911 precisely because they were foreign conquerors. Now, the Manchus were considered

merely as part of a unified Chinese people and the political absolutism of their dynasty was the political model towards which the Kuomintang was tending.

With the publication of *China's Destiny*, the first great revolutionary cycle, which started in 1911, was terminated. The old Celestial Empire and Mandarin civilization had been destroyed, civil wars and famines had wrecked and plundered China for thirty-five years and the Kuomintang, the revolutionary party of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, the enemy of conservative Yuan Shi-Kai, had reverted to the Manchu ideal. There was little difference left between the old Dowager Empress Tzu-Hsi and the generalissimo. Official China was back where it had started in 1911 but much the poorer for it, and of all the component parts of the old empire, Tibet was the only country which fared better at the end of the Second World War than before the revolution of 1911.

In August 1945, Japan's surrender to the allies put an end to World War II. Here again, a cycle, which started when Japan's ports were opened by Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853, was completed. For the first time in history, the islands of Nippon were occupied by enemy troops and the Empire of the Rising Sun lost all her overseas possessions with the stroke of a pen.

Soviet troops occupied Manchuria and wiped off the shame of Russian defeats in the 1905 war against Japan. At the same time, they established a geographical contact with Chinese Communists who had strongly entrenched themselves in north China and who were now in a position to challenge the National Kuomintang. While Chiang Kai-Shek's tottering government tried to settle down in the shambles of Nanking, India was making swift strides towards self-government and, ultimately, towards independence. The

British were pulling out and Tibet, which lived for forty years under the shadow of British-Indian protection, was getting worried. Should Tibet continue its present relationship with a weakened India or should she try to have her independence proclaimed and recognized by the great power? These were difficult decisions to make in the post-war period. Many a brow was furrowed in Lhasa, trying to disentangle the political mess into which the increasing chaos of Asia was slowly dragging the Roof of the World.

CHAPTER XIX

BACK TO LHASA

TSARONG SHAPE GAVE a great luncheon party several weeks after my arrival in Lhasa. Large tents had been pitched in the gardens, camp tables and folding chairs were spread out in their shade. Every Tibetan of any importance in Lhasa was there and this was by far the most brilliant party I attended in Lhasa. Two Living Buddhas, all the high-ranking abbots, aristocrats and wealthy members of Lhasa society were crowded on the well-kept grass between luxurious flower beds. After an exciting game of table tennis between a Living Buddha and a young official who lost his turquoise earring in the process, luncheon was served.

Our thirty-five-course meal started with bird's-nest soup, followed by shark's fins and various suspicious-looking dishes of unknown composition. Just as we were halfway through our lunch and just as I had, at last, become proficient in the art of eating with chopsticks without spilling their contents on the beautiful brocades and silk gowns of my neighbours, a sort of embarrassed silence spread over the assembled guests. A rattle of chains made me turn round and, to my stupefaction, I saw an intelligent-looking lama walking out of the courtyard with fettered feet, his neck and hands caught in a padlocked wooden cangue. He was quickly shushed away by our irate host as if he were a stray yak wandering in the holy precinct of a temple.

I turned towards George and asked him who the unfortunate monk was.

"Oh, one of the high lamas involved in the recent conspiracy against the regent," he answered. "He was arrested three weeks ago and is allowed to spend his sentence in our house. He is a distant relative of ours."

I suddenly remembered George's refusal to come with me to Sera monastery and inquired about the recent political trouble.

Apparently, the end of the war and of Chinese aggressiveness had eliminated the tacit truce which all Tibetan factions had agreed to observe in the face of external threats.

Discontent, always unavoidable, becomes dangerous only when it can be focused on a potent idea or on a powerful personality. After the war, discontent in Lhasa centred around the former regent, the nervous Reting Rimpoche. His vast political ambition had made him restless after having tasted the supreme power of being regent of Tibet. He could not reconcile himself to being merely the head of a lamasery. As long as the Second World War and trouble with the Chinese had threatened the independence of his country, he had kept quiet. However, when this foreign danger faded away in 1945 he started plotting, gathering the disgruntled and the discontented into a small, heterogeneous but troublesome group of reformists who professed to be more patriotic than the present government.

The plot became serious in the spring of 1946 and started with an attempt on the life of the old regent. A time bomb was sent to the ruler but was fortunately delayed on the way and exploded on the seventh of April in the house of a friend. The Kashag reacted vigorously. Two *shapes* and a battalion of Tibetan troops went to Reting and, despite his alleged magical powers and proficiency in psychic matters, arrested the ex-regent on the thirteenth of April. He was

brought back to Lhasa, handed over to the giant *khambas* of the Dalai Lama's bodyguard and thrown into jail. He died mysteriously a few days later or rather, as it was said in Lhasa, he "willed himself out of his present incarnation."

But his arrest was the signal for a serious revolt of monks. Reting lamasery was the first to give the signal after having got over the initial surprise. At the same time, on the sixteenth of April the lamas of the College of Sera-Chhe, one of the four colleges of Sera monastery, murdered their Mongolian abbot and rose against the government. Sera is only three miles from the Potala and the battle between the monks and the army was witnessed by the entire population of Lhasa. The Sera monks finally surrendered on April 29 and resumed their religious devotions as if nothing had happened. The troops sent to quell the revolt in Reting found the monastery empty when they arrived, the monks having fled and dispersed in the countryside.

On the whole, the plot and the limited trouble in a few lamaseries hardly made a ripple on the surface of the average Tibetan's life. It involved, in fact, few principles and was mainly due to unavoidable clashes between strong personalities. Needless to add, the Chinese got hold of the trouble and blew it up into a major political crisis in Tibet. According to reports emanating from Shanghai and inspired by the Kuomintang, Mr. Chen had played a major part in solving the crisis, whereas in fact he remained safely inside the walls of his embassy. But, once more, the Kuomintang Chinese had the attention of world public opinion since Tibet is unable to defend her cause in the international forum.

Each year, at the beginning of July, the Dalai Lama's family gives a great garden party on its extensive estates, two hours away from Lhasa. These estates were given to the

father of the God-King, a humble Chinese farmer who was brought back with his wife and his other children along with the Chosen One. Tradition prescribes that the father of the new ruler be given the title of *kung* (duke) and large estates to support his exalted rank. The late duke, who thought that the result of this incredible lottery was due to his own merits in previous incarnations, had become insufferably overbearing. Vulgar and insolent, his interventions in the Parliament had become the great joke of his brainier colleagues. Tibetans always turn to ridicule rather than to tragedy and the humorous contempt of Lhasa society only served to aggravate the duke's quick temper.

That was why, for instance, the amiable Major Bista had not been invited to the party. This customary omission had its origin in a private feud between the major and the Dalai Lama's father. The Nepalese representative went riding through the streets of Lhasa with his Gurkha escort one day, when the golden palanquin of the duke happened to appear at the other end of the narrow thoroughfare. Either one or the other had to turn round and retreat. This unforeseen contingency had not been regulated by the Tibetan protocol and the palanquin went right ahead until forced to stop in front of the stubborn Gurkhas. As the bearers laid his sedan chair on the ground, the wrathful duke looked out of the window. He ordered the Nepalese to retreat; they refused to budge. Infuriated, the duke jumped out of the palanquin and, cane in hand, started lashing right and left at the Gurkhas. The Nepalese remained perfectly cool and calmly by-passed the grounded palanquin.

This incident brought Tibet and Nepal to the brink of a disastrous war. The hostilities were averted only when the Lhasa government disclaimed responsibility for the ill-bred duke. In sign of renewed friendship, the Maharaja of Nepal

presented Tibet with two splendid elephants. The magnificent beasts were sent to Lhasa over 21,000-foot passes and one of them died on the way. But the other leviathan reached Lhasa in good shape and I saw it every day, walking ponderously round the Potala, terrifying mules and horses.

However, since then, the Nepalese representative is no longer invited to the parties of the ruler's family. The irascible duke is now dead and his wife, whom I had passed on my way up in the Chumbi Valley, was in India. The Dalai Lama has several brothers, one of whom became an officer in the regular Chinese army and went to the military academy of Whampoa. Another, who is just one year older and closest to the Dalai Lama, was our host. This young boy looked as intelligent as his holy brother and had the reputation of having great influence over him. They are often together and, because of the semi-confinement of the Dalai Lama and his very specialized education, it would not be surprising if this brother, free to travel and benefit from a modern education, has a great part to play in Tibetan politics. We talked a great deal during the afternoon; he described the secluded life of his celestial brother and confided that he would very much like to go to India. He listened wide-eyed to my descriptions of life in India and the West, fascinated and wishing that he could spend several years in a Western college.

The Chinese ambassador, Mr. Chen, and his colleague, Mr. Liu, sat at our table. Mr. Chen affected a scornful familiarity with our young host which was obviously and amusingly distasteful to him. Furious, the old mandarin revenged himself by talking at great length about the only potential threat to the Dalai Lama's supremacy—the Panchen Rimpoche.

After his death in 1937, several parties had been sent out by Tashilumpo authorities in Shigatse and by the Kuomintang

Chinese to search for the Panchen Lama's reincarnation. Proceeding in the same way and with the same methods as for the Dalai Lama but with less ostentation, Chinese parties are alleged to have located him in 1943 at Litang, in the province of Sikang. Shortly afterward, the Chinese enthroned him in the monastery of Kum-Bum near Lake Koko Nor, in General Ma Pu-Fang's realm. Whether he was the rightful Incarnation or not, Lhasa refused to acknowledge him as the new Panchen Lama. The Tibetan government was quite prepared to receive the youngster and have him examined in Lhasa but definitely refused the Chinese request to send him back to Shigatse with a strong Chinese escort as "protection." This Chinese army of occupation would never leave Tibet and would stir up trouble between Lhasa and Shigatse.

The Panchen Lama and his old partisans in Shigatse were the last weapons which the Kuomintang had left against Tibet. They were poor weapons. Tibet was in no mood for civil wars or disunity after the affair of the Reting Rimpoche. Furthermore, the warlords of the border provinces, more lucid than the generalissimo, were getting anxious about the growing threat of Communism in China. They were then beginning to foresee the time when they might need a friendly Tibet in their rear, when the death struggle against the Reds would start. The Panchen Lama was not much of an issue in 1947 and Mr. Chen's efforts to intimidate his hosts were wasted.

With Jigme Taring's party started the long period of summer holidays during which the entire population of Lhasa emigrates for several weeks to suburban parts and woods. At a time when the temperature rises to the nineties and when at an altitude of 12,000 feet the burning sun

scorches every inch of unprotected skin, rich and poor alike pitch white and blue tents under the cool shadows of walnuts, elms or poplars. The favourite camping grounds lie along the rustling waters of the Kyi River and its affluents. There the wealthy set up huge tents which they furnish for a two or three weeks' stay. For hours they remain seated around low tables covered with Tibetan delicacies—*tsampa* which is a heap of roasted grains of barley, *chura* or dried cheese and *jimpa*, unleavened scones of wheat. They wash down their heavy meals with unbelievable quantities of *chang*, Tibet's very harmless beer. In the evening they often get drunk on *arak*, a potent extract of *chang* which tastes like liquid fire.

After their meals, the inhabitants of the tents hire groups of musicians and dancers. While the drums beat continuously, the dancers whirl round at as fast a pace as howling dervishes until they fall on the ground, exhausted. Wrestlers and jugglers entertain the poorer section of the population and the fighting spirit of the Tibetans, curbed by Buddhism's pacifist influence, explodes often in the enthusiastic encouragement of the audience. Over-enthusiastic spectators frequently quarrel and start a fight of their own which, if it is exciting enough, can earn them sufficient money to buy several pints of beer at a nearby canteen. The greatest success was achieved when a facetious youngster tied in a knot the braided pigtails of two enraged fighters. Under the cheers and wild laughter of a large crowd, they both lost half of their hair.

I turned from the sight of the gay and carefree crowd and went back to Jigme Taring's party. His charming and devoted wife, Mary, talked for hours about religion and metaphysics. How strange, I thought, that everything in Tibet, even gay parties under the sunshine, should bathe in

this mystic atmosphere. It did not prevent her from smiling at her children who danced a few Tibetan steps. A gramophone hidden in the bushes was playing some Tibetan records made in the studio of Dekyi Lingka.

Dinner around small tables in Jigme's drawing room lasted several hours. A great many distinguished ladies were present and Tsarong Shape, who for some unknown reason was in a very gay mood, used his dozen English words to make discreetly humorous and often sarcastic remarks at the expense of some solemn and plump woman who understood only Tibetan. He then roared with laughter and to atone for his unkind comments gave his victim a new helping of putrid black eggs.

Darkness fell long before the signal for departure was given. All the guests left at the same time and a huge cavalcade accompanied by armed torchbearers clattered through the dark and silent streets of the Forbidden City. While our flaming torches threw fantastic shadows on the naked walls, the procession became gradually thinner as guest after guest reached his home. Dekyi Lingka being beyond Lhasa, I ended up by riding alone with Chumpa and a chaprassi, both of them half drunk but exhilarated by this happy medieval life.

CHAPTER XX

TIBET AND THE COLD WAR

SIPPING MY CUSTOMARY gin and lime during the moonlit nights of Dekyi Lingka, I listened to the radio broadcasts from Delhi. Those were the days when the British were pulling out and India was waking up to independence after a long slumber of almost two centuries.

What this meant for Tibet, I could easily imagine. Every official in Lhasa was preoccupied. Day after day, plans for the transfer of sovereignty unfolded themselves with more precision and increasing speed. To the Tibetans, just as much as to the rest of the world, the British withdrawal from the political complex of the Indian Ocean was an event of the first magnitude. Not only were India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma to become independent; central Asia and the defence of the Himalayas was to be abandoned to India. Even here, in Dekyi Lingka, the British-Indian mission was becoming an Indian mission and being handed over to Delhi. Hugh Richardson was preparing to pack his bags, not knowing how long he would remain in Lhasa after the fifteenth of August. Even the powerful British consulate in Kashgar (Sinkiang), which had checked Russian imperialism and Soviet infiltration toward India for half a century, was to become a joint Indo-Pakistani consulate. The solid rear of Tibet was slowly crumbling and no longer offered the guarantees of protection and stability which it had in the past.

In those days, I called privately on the Kalon Lama and the *shapes*. It was not long before I discovered that, in their

thinking about foreign affairs, cabinet ministers and leading Tibetans were sharply divided into two different groups. On the one hand, I talked to those who could be termed the pro-Indians. Fat and pleasant Kashoe Shape was at the head of this group.

Like all prominent people in Lhasa, Kashoe Shape had a special reception room in his massive residence. He squatted like a lotus on a large gilded throne, contemplating his finely chiselled furniture, his valuable collection of jades and his serene Buddhas. I sat on a cushion at the foot of his throne and, sipping my buttered tea contentedly, inquired about his views on the international future of Tibet.

"Nehru is a very great man," said Kashoe, "and though he does not admit it, he is at heart a mystic. He will carry out the old British-Indian policy and protect Tibet against Chinese nationalism or aggressive Communism." Kashoe and his group thought that Tibet was too weak a country to become absolutely independent and rely on no one.

A more uncertain view was held by young, smiling and amiable Surkhang Shape. He expressed doubts, not so much about India's willingness or even desire to protect Tibet but about India's own stability in the future. He did not believe Delhi could be of much help and even now he pointed out the great weakening of India, its partition into two rival states and the beginning of the great religious riots. While Kashoe represented the old conservative school, Surkhang teamed up with the younger and more aggressively nationalistic group. We talked for hours together and, feeling that my friendship for Tibet was deep and sincere, he paid me the highest compliment any Tibetan can pay:

"You should become a new Charles Bell," said he. (I only wish I could!)

Extreme nationalism and full confidence, not only in Tibet's inherent strength but also in the necessity of deep friendship with Britain and the United States, was represented by tough and lively Tsarong Shape. This old self-made man, perhaps the most remarkable man in Tibet and certainly the wealthiest, has been consistently the most modern-minded, pro-Western personality in Lhasa. Diplomatic recognition by the Western Powers, admission of Tibet as a full member of the United Nations and creation of a large and well-armed Tibetan army in order to resist expanding Communism are his main ideas. In a peaceful and traditionally neutral country, Tsarong's views are somewhat revolutionary. However, if the whole of Tibet is made up of men of Tsarong's character, there is not the slightest doubt that this country can stand on its own feet.

On one of the walls of Dekyi Lingka was a large map of Tibet, the largest in existence. I spent many hours studying this confidential work of the Indian Topographical Survey, amazed that until now this country of great strategic importance should have remained unknown and neglected to such an extent by the Western Powers.

The borders of independent Tibet after the Second World War are more precise than they have ever been before. In the west, Tibet has long ago abandoned Ladak to the Indian state of Kashmir and borders on the Zaskar mountain range. Then, following the Himalayas for almost two thousand miles along the state of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, then along the Indian province of Assam, the border finally reaches the large monastery of Chatreng in the south-east corner of Tibet. The latter portion of the Indo-Tibetan border has never been delimited, as it is theoretically situated in the impenetrable jungles and mountains of the Assam

border where the wild Abors and Mishmis recognize the sovereignty of neither state.

The border then turns to the north, following approximately the course of the upper Yangtze. Fifty miles west of the river, the town of Chamdo is the last Tibetan agglomeration on the important trade route leading eastward from Lhasa to Tachienlu in China. It is also the headquarters of the eastern Tibetan army, with its ten thousand tough and disciplined soldiers armed with machine guns and field artillery. A radio station had been set up on the outskirts of the city by the end of 1947. Chamdo is thus directly and immediately connected with Lhasa and the Tibetan War Department. Facing it on the other side of the roaring river, the Chinese troops of Marshal Liu Wen-Hui were based on Batang, capital city of the eastern part of Tibet which is occupied by the Chinese.

North of Chamdo, the border turns and follows a north-west course along the Amne Machin Mountains, up to the Tsangne La Pass which leads into Tsinghai, parallel to the course of the upper Mekong and several days west of Jeykundo, the largest town between Lhasa and Lake Koko Nor. Not only is this city the midway halt of the large caravans which travel twice a year between Lhasa and Mongolia, but it was also the headquarters of General Ma Pu-Fang's south-western Moslem-Chinese army. Facing these troops from a distance of two hundred miles, the north-eastern Tibetan army is stationed around Nagchuka where geographical necessities prescribe that camels be exchanged for yaks. From there the border runs north and loses itself in the unexplored marshes of the Tsaidam.

As for the arctic Chang Tang highlands and the unknown Kuen Lun Mountains which tower over sea-level Chinese Turkestan, they are terra incognita to Tibetans and foreigners

alike. No ordinary human being dares travel along the 1,500-mile length of these bleak and frozen lands where even valleys are 18,000 or 19,000 feet high.

Looking at this map, which I had brought down into my room so as to be able to study it better, I was struck by the strategic potentialities of the Roof of the World, of this colossal natural fortress standing in the heart of Asia and almost inaccessible by land. Behind the Cyclopean Himalayas and Kuen Lun mountain ranges, Tibet towers on all sides above the three most populated countries in the world: China's five hundred million, India's four hundred and the USSR's two hundred. Any strong power based on the Chang Tang would control the heart of Asia—not only would such bases be but an hour's flight from India's Delhi and two or three hours from China's Chungking, but they would be only 800 miles from Tashkent and 600 from Alma Ata, thus controlling the booming industrial centres of Soviet Central Asia.

As I was looking at this map, the radio broadcast announced that Chinese Turkestan was being attacked by Soviet Outer Mongolian troops (July 1947). There was little doubt in my mind that Tibet was destined to become one of the borders of the expanding Soviet empire. And this was the time chosen by the British to withdraw from Tibet and from central Asia!

Though I heard a great many confidential items of news in Lhasa to the effect that a certain amount of Communist infiltration was taking place in the Mongolian colleges of some large lamaseries, I could hardly believe that it was widespread and that it could endanger the safety of the Tibetan state. However, Communist infiltration has definitely taken place in Tibet since the end of the Second World War. I became convinced that if even Tibet was taken over by the Soviets or the Chinese Communists, the whole of India and

of south-east Asia would become strategically untenable and left wide open to an invasion. Nestled in the stratospheric and hardly known valleys of the Roof of the World, as inexpugnable as if they were situated on the planet Mars, Communist armies and air force could forcibly dominate the largest part of Asia.

A few weeks after my arrival in the Forbidden City, the dust raised by the Reting Rimpoche's revolt had settled down. Lhasa then took a good look at the swiftly changing continent of Asia. The Tibetans watched the whirlwind transformation of Asia, chaos and revolutions all around, the religious riots of India, the gradual disintegration of Nationalist China, the spreading anarchy of south-east Asia and the Red tides from the north with growing apprehension. Would the political floods of post-war Asia which were already lapping at the base of the Roof of the World finally engulf the last wise and secluded country on earth?

CHAPTER XXI

ASIA'S DESTINY

DURING THE FIRST half of the twentieth century, Tibet remained remarkably stable and peaceful. Its religious civilization and moral values were intact at the end of World War II as they were in the beginning of the century. The Roof of the World was a living witness of Asia's past, of an Asia uninfluenced by the Industrial Revolution, by colonial exploitation or by imperialistic conquests. From its lofty mountains, one could understand Asia's upheavals far better than from any other vantage point. Looking at Asia through Tibet was like looking through a powerful telescope which places all political problems in their right setting and brilliantly clarifies the contemporary evolution of this great continent.

In this age of increasing scientific knowledge, when it would seem that all problems, human or otherwise, can be explained in strict material terms, it was unavoidable that the Western World would misunderstand the convulsions of the Orient. Because the impact of the west on Asia was so violent and obvious, the Westerner became the psychological victim of his own material power and in his conceit imagined that he had won, not only the economic and political possession of the great continent, but also the subservience and allegiance of the Asiatic mind. Believing that the Orientals understood their own problems in Western terms, Europeans and Americans drew up bold social and economic plans, theoretically wise but out of their natural psychological setting. Whether they defended colonialism and imperialism

or whether they fought those notions, it never occurred to the Occidentals that the gap between East and West was as great after the Second World War as it was in Kipling's day and that the real problem might have to be solved on an entirely different plane. The confusion goes on, arguments are thrown against each other, solutions are proposed in meaningless terms and on a level on which there is no real struggle. Why, then, can Tibet throw a special light on this puzzling problem? Probably because all the emotions and thoughts freely expressed in Tibet, which are part of a common Oriental and Asiatic attitude to life, are hidden and disguised in the partly Westernized rest of Asia by inhibitions and psychological complexes of all sorts. All the antiquated concepts and ideas, very much alive in Tibet but which Western man believes to be disappearing in Asia, are simply going underground and remain more potent than ever. Such immense changes needed by the adaptation of Asia to a new way of life can only be brought about slowly.

The struggle for Asia concerns, more than anything else, mysticism and religion. Extreme nationalism in Asia is nothing more than a gigantic shadow playing on a Western screen, the shadow of very deep but dimly perceived currents of thought and emotion. There is only one clue to the present enigma of Asia and that is that religion is still the dominant political force in the great continent, by its absence as well as by its presence.

Most of Asia's population, almost one billion human beings, live in its two great subcontinents—India and China, or White and Black Expanses as the Tibetans call them. For millennia both these areas have been centres of great empires and prodigious civilizations. However, their similitude ends there. In every other respect, their historical evolution differs.

India has been in contact with the West for the last five centuries since the days of Vasco da Gama. China's real contact started as late as the middle of the nineteenth century. India was under European domination and European rule for several centuries. China, except for a few leased territories, never was. India has seen many different cultures and civilizations, has bred many different empires which, often, had little in common with one another. China has known, for four thousand years, one continuous civilization only, a civilization which has absorbed every external influence or invader and digested it. Still, China's civilization remained alive and spread to central and south-east Asia. The essence of China's culture and of the political system which was an emanation of it has remained intact through thousands of years of revolutions and invasions.

India's widely different cultures were always in conflict with one another, and though the octopus-like Hinduism did influence every civilization that came into contact with it, most of the invading people and cultures retained their separate identities and individualities, just as separate castes were able to live side by side and perpetuate themselves for thousands of years.

But the basic difference between India and China lies in the fact that India's cultures were essentially religious whereas China's civilization was essentially worldly. While Indians concentrated on metaphysical and mystical research and preoccupations, the Chinese devoted their energies to the art of good living without bothering too much about the after-life, following the terse advice of Confucius: "Don't know life; how know death?" India was the country of great tensions and exaggerations where side by side live the greatest asceticism and the greatest debauches. China absorbed Buddhism and its middle-path doctrine, adopting its tension-

destroying technique but ultimately using it for another purpose. Gradually turning away from metaphysical preoccupations about the after-life, the Chinese applied it to their subtle enjoyment of earthly life, of art and literature, of politics and economics. Passions were not suppressed as advocated by Indian mystics but disciplined and enjoyed in a rational way. China's civilization became, in time, an essentially irreligious civilization in which Confucius' teachings retained far more influence than Buddha's.

When the full impact of the Industrial Revolution fell upon Asia, the reactions of both India and China were, of course, widely different. India's spiritual soul not only survived two centuries of British rule but also absorbed the scientific impact far better than China. The British in India had destroyed the last alien empire which had established itself in the subcontinent—the great Moghuls of Delhi. But the real personality of India, its basic culture which is spiritual and little concerned with the pleasures of this earth, survived without difficulty and is just as much alive today as it ever was.

China's reaction was diametrically opposite. Its worldly and refined civilization had crystallized and stultified during the centuries of Manchu rule. It had been spared a real contact with the fast-changing Western world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in a time when India was already under its powerful influence. But, for being delayed, the shock was all the more violent when contact was established with the Occident. Having no spiritual or metaphysical roots, this worldly and irreligious civilization saw its foundations crumble and disintegrate. The collapse came quite suddenly with the revolution of 1911, the downfall of the empire and of the mandarin system.

Therefore, as India's spiritual message to the rest of the

world gained in power and importance during the first half of the twentieth century in spite of its colonial status in the world of politics, China had nothing to convey or to contribute to the rest of mankind. China had become a spiritual and mental vacuum, a void which had to be filled somehow but was not filled in time by the West.

Whereas Gandhi had become the symbol of Hinduism and of its spiritual power applied to politics, whereas he appealed to the religious emotionalism of the Indian masses and rejuvenated the old mystical teachings of Hinduism, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, the father of the Chinese Republic, rehashed dull and uninspiring political messages copied from the West, devoid of any emotional appeal or intellectual originality. In Asiatic politics, Gandhi was a giant and Sun Yat-Sen a pygmy.

Besides the two great subcontinents and civilizations which they produced, Asia bred a third element of great importance—Islam. The world of the Green Crescent, which now extends throughout half of the Asiatic continent, created a civilization and a distinct culture of its own; it became a world of transition between East and West, stretching across Africa and Asia from Morocco to Java and from East Africa to Central China. Based on a simple but vigorous faith, Islam shared Asia's apparent decay in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But here again we have to remark on Islam's very different response to the challenge of the Industrial Revolution: it did not adapt itself as well as Hinduism or mystical Japan and it put up a long, stubborn resistance against its devastating influence. But the Islamic world did not suffer from the psychic void of China, and, though slow and awkward in its response to the challenge of scientific thought, it has kept its faith and moral values intact.

Its mushrooming success after the end of World War II was due far more to its own excellent organization, spirit of sacrifice and stern discipline than to any external help.

Chiang's failure was not only the incapacity of an honest but narrow-minded man whose blended religion might have proved successful in China; it was mainly his failure to inspire his subordinates and the Kuomintang with his sincere and dynamic faith. In time and with the help of the war, the Kuomintang's morals disintegrated completely and no amount of external help could bolster up a political machine so completely rotten from the inside.

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Communism was not only successful in China but also in all countries that had been, at one time or another, under the joint influence of refined China and pacifist Buddhism. Korea, Burma and French Indo-China were strongly infiltrated and their Communist armies became so powerful as to prove, for the time being at least, an insurmountable obstacle to their transformation into democratic states.

But the story of Communism's meeting with Islam was an entirely different matter. Bordering the Soviet Union and its satellite Communist states, from Istanbul, through Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sinkiang and Moslem China, a solid wall of Moslem faith opposed to the spread of Marxism an almost invincible barrier which could only be overcome by outright military invasion by Communist armies.

When Iran, a country just as corrupt and badly ruled as Chiang Kai-Shek's China, managed to expel the Soviet army of occupation and the local Communists from Azerbaijan in 1946, the Western world was amazed. Thinking in their usual terms of capitalism, socialism, Marxism and 'isms' of all kinds, Western governments could not understand how weak and defenceless Iran managed to have been so little infiltrated

by Communism. But what of Turkey and Afghanistan who harbour no Communists worth mentioning in spite of their having extensive common borders with the USSR? What of Egypt and the Middle East where poverty and deplorable social conditions are coupled with old-fashioned political tyranny? In the post-war Arab world, and especially in Egypt, the revolutionary spirit is monopolized, not by the almost non-existent Communists but by organizations such as the fanatical Moslem Brotherhood, a powerful semi-secret society which extends throughout the Arab world from Tunis to Baghdad. In Egypt especially, students, workers, discontented middle-class people, all look up to the Moslem Brotherhood as the only sincere political-religious movement capable of ridding Egypt of its corrupt Pasha class. They all find in the Koran enough social and political dynamite to explode the entire social fabric of the Middle East without in the least having to borrow from Marx.

If we turn to Indonesia, we recall the struggle of the Dutch to regain their former colonial possessions after World War II. What had passed unnoticed, however, drowned as it was by the conflicting statements of the Dutch and the republican leaders, was that Java's Moslem population has opposed a fiercer resistance to Communism than to the Dutch themselves. When, near the end of 1948, the Communist Indonesian leader Musso landed in Java straight from Moscow and staged a Marxist uprising, the revolt was put down in a few days by the republican army. Shortly afterward, the same republican army was overwhelmed by the Dutch.

The French had the same struggle to get back to Indo-China. But in this Buddhist country, which had been under the influence of China for centuries, the nationalist Viet Minh's leader was Communist Dr. Ho Chi-Minh and the entire campaign of the Viet-Namh was Communist-directed,

fighting successfully for years against a French army which was much larger than the Dutch forces in Indonesia.

Burma and British Malaya have been fighting Communist guerillas for years, regardless of whether these states had just been liberated from the colonial yoke as Burma, or were still under colonial rule as Malaya. This should dispose of the argument that Communism thrives on colonial imperialism. In the independent Philippines, the Communist Hukbalahaps were making just as much trouble as the guerillas of Malaya.

The ease with which Communism spread in China can be compared with the difficulties which it encountered in Moslem Sinkiang. When in the end of 1944, Moscow fostered the anti-Chinese revolt in northern Sinkiang, the Soviets found, with dismay, that the rebel Turkis wanted to start a *jihad* or holy war against the infidels. The Communists helped in the setting up of the independent Illi régime in which the Chinese had no part and they organized in the south groups of Moslem raiders who almost seized Kashgar and Yarkand in 1946. But Marxism cannot break down the strong Moslem faith of the Turkis and has to face an unexpected enemy—Moslem agents from anti-Soviet Turkey who encourage their Turkis cousins and co-religionists, not only in their anti-Chinese nationalism but also in their anti-Communist struggle.

We finally reach western China, the area of the "Big Horses"—Generals Ma Pu-Fang, Ma Hung-Kwei and fifteen million Chinese Moslems who were the most determined and bitter opponents of Communism in China. This large block of Chinese Moslems, centred around Tsinghai, Ningshia and Kansu provinces, represents the eastern geographical limit of the large Moslem wall which lies along the Communist empire's border, from Istanbul to Lanchow. Marxism-Leninism could never have hoped to conquer these territories

by ideological means and only outright military conquest can bring these people within the expanding Soviet empire.

We cannot, therefore, escape from the conclusion that Communism comes to Asia as a new faith, the only answer to the challenge of the Industrial Revolution which still bewilders the great majority of Asiatics. Every Communist is a religious missionary who makes converts among people who have lost their old faith; he can solve the most important riddle of Asia—the psychological problem of frustration and inferiority complexes of the average Asiatic. It is not the prospect of material gains which can induce so many men to fight, suffer and give their lives but rather the fanatical conviction that they have the right idea. Dialectical materialism as enjoyed by European or Slav Communists has little appeal for the Asiatics; rather the prophetic vision of Marx's *Kapital* and the blind faith in this new bible which attracts them far more. It is not difficult to foresee that the time will come soon, in the next generation perhaps, when Asiatic Communism will separate itself from its Western counterpart, not only politically but also ideologically.

The old religions of Asia differ widely in their response to the challenge of Marxism. Aggressive Islam meets Communism on a political plane headlong and without any attempt at compromise. It is either one or the other—either Mohammed or Marx—either complete victory or complete defeat, and only an overwhelming military pressure can bring Moslem countries and people into the Communist fold.

The other extreme is represented by pacifist Buddhism which will hardly struggle except in Tibet and the adjoining lamaist districts. From a Buddhist viewpoint, why should Gotama's followers give up their pacifism and get involved in earthly struggles which would contribute in no way to their

soul's enlightenment? Mohammed taught that the jihad and the killing of the infidels was a religious duty. Gotama taught the reverse with the idea that Buddha's truth is ever present, a universal and eternal truth which no amount of material pressure can destroy since it transcends all matter. Therefore, Buddhism could conceivably be wiped off the face of the earth for a time. But karma and its powerful ideas would still be there and its subtle influence would, sooner or later, blend with the dominating political force, perhaps with Asiatic Communism. Seen from a distance, Communism is a blind force which rushes into the spiritual voids of Asia but will have to stop and think, sooner or later. While it is probable that it would keep many of its political and social features, Asiatic Communism would shed its thin coating of outdated materialism and replace it with a mysticism drawn from the inexhaustible metaphysical resources of Asia. This might take place in central Asia and the Far East.

Between Islam and Buddhism, Hinduism occupies a very special place. Hinduism will fight Communism on both the political and mystical levels. It will fight Marxism socially and politically on the same level as Islam but from the opposite direction. Hinduism's caste system is as undemocratic as Islam's universality is democratic. The danger that millions of outcastes which Hinduism lost to Islam in the past might turn to Communism is not very great, as untouchability is destroyed as such by India's new legislation.

Hinduism can also fight materialistic Marxism as subtly as Buddhism, and Gandhi's mysticism is a very potent Asiatic force, the only new force which can be opposed to Communism at the present time and the only one through which the West can still influence Asia's soul. In his person and his actions, Gandhi symbolized perfectly the synthesis of practical politics and religious mysticism which is, nowadays, the

only level on which the struggle for Asia is really taking place.

The combination of a shrinking world, the growing industrial power of the West and the metaphysical challenge of scientific thought has smashed every living civilization in Asia—except Tibet's. What Asia is confusedly fighting against is the growing proletarianization of the Oriental world, against its humiliating transformation into a suburban imitation of the powerful West. Strangely enough, when religion is too weak to provide a psychological support, Communism appears to be the only weapon thanks to which, in the midst of appalling misery and suffering, the face-conscious Chinese, for example, can now shout back to the West: "We are more modern and more progressive than you are."

This is the tragic response of a large part of Asia to the inability of the West to sell, alongside its industrial technique, its moral values in which the Occidental believes less and less anyway. Asia is now in the process of searching for its own values and its own response to the challenge of scientific thought. What will this quest lead to? That is the secret of Asia's destiny, the greatest political riddle of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER XXII

MYSTERIOUS ORACLES

HOWEVER HARD I tried in Lhasa, I often found it difficult to keep my mind on politics. Mysticism and magic always seemed to float in the very atmosphere of the Forbidden City and probably prepared my mind to witness the most extraordinary ceremonies on earth—the trances of the great oracles.

As I left Dekyi Lingka one sunny morning in the company of George Tsarong and Chumpa, I kept remembering one of Lord Curzon's main sayings:

"In the heart of Asia lasts to this day the one mystery which the nineteenth century has still left to the twentieth to explore—the Tibetan Oracle of Lhasa."

Was I going to explore this mystery? I hardly knew, and, though I was curious to see these famed but weird ceremonies, I was still unaware of the amazing mental journey which I was about to undertake during the next few weeks. All I knew was that we were going to the temple of Nechung as I had been invited to witness the monthly trance of the State Oracle.

We arrived in Nechung about nine a.m. and rode along the paved alley up to the main gate of the impressive shrine. A monk attendant caught the bridles of our horses and I hastily climbed up the broad stairway leading into the large courtyard of the temple. As I always forgot that my lungs did not work satisfactorily at 12,000 feet I stumbled breathlessly into the vast courtyard and had to sit down on a step for a rest. I would have stopped anyway because of the strange sight that caught my eyes. Five or six hundred purple-robed lamas

were squatting on the ground side by side in long, regular rows, chanting slowly some endless psalmody in low, guttural voices. They seemed to drag these incredibly deep sounds from the bottom of their throats. As they prayed, the lamas swayed to and fro with perfect uniformity, as waves rolling on a purple lake. When the chanting stopped, huge ten-foot trumpets sent deep blasts from the roof of the temple and were replaced after a time by the shrill lament of small silver trumpets. When the music ceased, the prayers started again.

Two stalwart brass jars poured out clouds of incense, and the sandalwood fumes floated up to the glittering roof of solid gold which crowns the temple. In front of the massive bronze door two green Chinese dragons guard the entrance to the holy precinct. Dark curtains of yak-hair cloth partly concealing the peristyle were covered with magic kyilbhors.

George whispered into the ear of a withered old lama and invited me to follow him into the mysterious sanctuary. We walked into the semi-darkness of a vast hall, and when my eyes became accustomed to the gloom I was able to admire the wonderful frescoes of leering devils adorning the walls. Tall pillars wrapped in red wool and crowned with carved cornices supported the heavily beamed ceiling; long rows of crimson cushions bordered the central alley. At the far end of the hall, six gigantic coloured statues surrounded a throne-like altar. I was able to distinguish a figure seated on the throne, surrounded by five or six lamas bending over him—it was the State Oracle of Tibet.

In order to be less conspicuous, I took the precaution of slipping over my Western clothes a lama's clerical toga. In the semi-darkness of the temple, no one paid the slightest attention to me.

While the monotonous droning of the incantations floated in from the courtyard and hundreds of lamas were streaming

into the temple, I slipped towards the throne as noiselessly as I could. Seated on a heap of silk cushions, the great medium was extravagantly robed in luxurious blue and green brocades. His shaven head was bare, jewels studded his necklaces and rings. A shining magic breastplate hung from his neck and a silver sword was lying on a low table near the throne.

Fascinated, I watched the lengthy proceedings without taking my eyes off the oracle. In order to go into a trance, he is required to expel his consciousness from his body; the spirit of the temple can then occupy his empty physical envelope and communicate with the physical world through the medium's mouth.

The hall was soon full of a crowd of lamas that overflowed into the courtyard. Suddenly there was a hushed silence, and, looking towards the door, I saw a group of monks withdrawing from the central alley to make room for a solemn procession stumping into the temple. Walking majestically between bowing and respectful lamas, Surkhang Shape was coming to Nechung to represent the Tibetan government at the ceremony. He seated himself in the centre of the hall, surrounded by brocaded officials and noblemen. Surkhang looked all round him and nodded his assent when asked if the proceedings could start.

He had hardly given the signal when the heavy doors were dragged back and closed with a bang. A booming thunder exploded in the huge hall under the guise of an extraordinary orchestra of trumpets, gongs, cymbals and drums. The lack of harmony could not have been greater and would have hurt the ears of the least musical Westerner. But as time went on and I became accustomed to the disharmony, a strange mystical sensation got hold of me. I could not explain the powerful effect of this music and I asked our old lama-

guide in a whisper if he could explain the purpose of these weird sounds.

To my surprise, he smiled and told me that these musical vibrations had been discovered after long researches in order to produce feelings of deep devotion and profound veneration on the audience. Why? Because these vibrations are the counterpart of natural sounds produced by the human body—sounds which can be heard when our fingers are pressed on our ears to shut out external sounds. He then pointed out the seven instruments which made up the orchestra and asked me to listen carefully: The thudding of the large drums, the sharp clapping of the damarus made of human skulls, the clashing sound of the cymbals and the wistful sighing of the conch shells, the ringing of the bells, the lamentation of clarinets, the blast of the ragdongs, and the shrill of thighbone trumpets.

I tested this the following day, in the quiet silence of Dekyi Lingka—putting my fingers on my ears, I pressed them in as deeply as I could, and indeed I heard the same sounds, although very faintly: the pulsating heartbeats, the noise of rustling water, the ringing of bells, deep thuds and whatnot. I have made this experiment many times since and can then easily imagine that I am still in a Tibetan temple.

My eyes wandered again towards the oracle. He was swaying on his altar, supported by four sturdy monks. His eyes were closed and his face was contracted with what looked like agonizing spasms. A few minutes later, he fell backwards on the throne and a tremendous head-dress, a huge heap of massive gold, ivory tusks and glittering jewels topped by peacock feathers, was adjusted on his head.

The medium was now lying backward on his throne, supported on each side by two monks. Another quarter of an hour elapsed during which he was shaken by spasmodic

convulsions; after a while he sat up, and under the strange light of twitching flames, perspiration could be seen streaming down his face. Suddenly, the numerous bells which adorned his golden costume started to tinkle rhythmically, and a few minutes later the oracle bounced up, dragging his lama attendants behind him. Unsheathing his sword like lightning, he executed a wild dance during which the cataclysmic orchestra sent out ear-splitting sounds. When the devilish ballet was over, the oracle collapsed for a short while; then he walked out slowly, supported by two monks and still agitated by spasmodic convulsions which the attendants had difficulty in controlling.

Surkhang Shape rose with dignity and presented a scarf to the oracle. A lama-secretary then addressed with grandiloquence the spirit of the temple who was supposed to have taken possession of the oracle's body:

"To the exalted footstool, composed of the dead bodies of the infidels, on which rest the feet of the Great Defender of Religion, the chief incarnation of the Almighty Conqueror of the enemies in the three Worlds, the Lamp of Wisdom."

The medium was then begged to give his oracular predictions of the forthcoming events and the lama-secretary took down his answers. Half sitting and half standing, the oracle then proceeded to bless the swirling masses of monks around him, who bowed and prostrated themselves in front of his throne. When the benediction was over, he threw grains of blessed rice all over the peristyle of the temple, while the monks whirled round and round, trying to catch the holy food. At times, he bounced over the crowd, his face a mask of tortured concentration which was in strange contrast to the violent exertions of his body. Suddenly, after a last bouncing, he fell back on the floor and, having lost his head-dress, passed out completely. With a wild howl, the crowd of monks

dispersed, while four monk attendants carried the unconscious body of the oracle back into his private apartments.

I went over to Surkhang Shape and we exchanged khạtas. I asked him if the oracle had answered his questions and pronounced anything of interest.

"Oh no," smiled Surkhang. "Nechung is quite new at the job. He has only been here for a year and has not yet prophesied. It takes a great deal of training, and, besides, the oracles had better not make mistakes and give wrong answers. Several have been degraded and thrown into jail for having uttered false prophecies."

On my way home with George, I thought about what I had seen and heard that day. I was very much impressed by all this, and the next morning, cursing my bad luck which had made me witness the trance of an untrained medium, I asked George if I could not attend another spellbinding ceremony. George frowned thoughtfully and mentioned that the Oracle of Gaadong was going into a trance next Sunday. But the ceremony was a private performance for the government of Tibet and it occurred only once a year; it was the great trance of the summer. Gaadong is supposed to have special power over the weather and this sacred performance is so important that all cabinet ministers have to attend.

Could I go? George said that he would ask for permission. However, no foreigners had ever witnessed this ceremony before and I should not entertain too much hope.

Saturday afternoon, George sent me a note. By special permission of the Kashag, I was allowed to go to Gaadong.

At five the next morning I jumped on to my pony in the courtyard and inquired about Chumpa, who was unaccountably missing. One of the servants went after him and I soon

had the explanation of this mysterious behaviour—Chumpa did not want to go to Gaadong; he was scared. Whether this was true or whether he just wanted the day off, it would have been useless to argue. I trotted out of Dekyi Lingka and picked up George at Tsarong House. We were on our way at dawn and had to ride for four hours before reaching Gaadong temple, a large golden-roofed shrine halfway up an ascending valley, dominating the large bend of the Kyi Chu River towards the south.

There was no crowd of lamas in front of the temple. Less than a hundred of them were squatting in the main courtyard, chanting slowly with their deep, guttural voices. The open-air showmanship of Nechung was completely absent. I felt that here was a more mysterious and, at the same time, a more important ceremony than the trance of the State Oracle.

The large assembly hall was bare of all furniture save for two rows of crimson cushions between massive red pillars in the centre. After waiting outside for half an hour, bathing in the mystic atmosphere created by the lama's incantations, I entered the hall in the footsteps of the Kashag and its colourful suite. The enigmatic Kalon Lama, smiling Surkhang Shape and pompous Kashoe Shape seated themselves on one of the rows. George and I took our places on the other row facing the Kashag, alongside delegations from all the important departments of the Tibetan administration. Small groups of lamas lined the walls and, in one corner, the musicians were tuning up their intruments.

After buttered tea had been served, a young monk walked past every official, carrying shoulder-high a shining gold jar in which sticks of crimson incense burned, spreading a delicate fragrance in the hall. Each dignitary brought out a silk scarf and passed it through the holy smoke. Except for a few occasional whispers, deep silence reigned in the the temple.

From behind the throne-altar came a shuffling sound and the oracle suddenly appeared, as if by magic. Sumptuously garbed in a long flowing robe of white and blue silk brocade, with a shining breastplate hanging loosely from his neck and holding a naked sword handled with ivory, covered with glittering jewels, the Oracle of Gaadong seated himself on the throne.

The silence was ripped wide open by the weird music of damaras, ragdongs, cymbals and thighbone trumpets which started immediately echoing through the hall. The intermissions were given to deep-toned incantations and recitations of the holy books.

Half concealed in the darkness of his abode, the oracle started his exercises to go into a trance. His loud breathing was deep and powerful, and, except for spasmodic jerks which shook his whole body, he remained completely still for more than an hour. With his eyes closed and his face trembling convulsively, he gave the impression of struggling inwardly with great intensity. Very gradually, blood appeared to withdraw from his changing features and his flesh looked as if it were melting away. While the thudding and shrilling of the music went on, I saw with stupefaction the bone structure of his face protrude as if it were becoming a death mask, a mere skull covered with thin grey skin. It was an unbelievable and petrifying metamorphosis of Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde.

The animation of his body increased slowly. Solidly held by four husky monks, the oracle started swaying, struggling and moaning. Perspiration streamed down his tortured face and there was no doubt in my mind that he was under the spell of excruciating suffering. Suddenly, he bounced up, wrenching himself free from the restraining support of the attendant lamas. Terrified, they grabbed him again and swiftly adjusted a huge construction of gold, jewels and feathers on

his head. The Gaadong oracle was possessed. The spirit of the temple had at last entered his body and he was completely immersed in his trance.

The music died down, the mysterious incantations stopped, the audience froze and remained perfectly still. Only the oracle's snake-like hissing could be heard in the deadly silence that followed. Restrained with difficulty, the medium burst forward, dragging his attendants with him. Struggling and writhing fiercely, he was forcibly seated on a large yellow dais in the centre of the hall.

The Kalon Lama slowly got up, followed by the cabinet ministers. The higher cabinet of Tibet was going to communicate with the occult! They bowed very low in front of the oracle who had become the incarnation of wild fury. Six lamas had difficulty restraining him, and I could easily see that the diabolical expression on his face horrified the entire audience. Foam dribbled through his gnashing teeth, and his greyish face, contracted with spasms, looked as if there was not a drop of blood or an ounce of flesh left under the skin. I was amazed and rather scared when I noticed that his blazing eyes turned frequently towards the group of lamas in which I had concealed myself, as if my presence was particularly displeasing to the spirit of the temple. His magic breastplate dangled right and left, flashing in all directions, dazzling the cringing and terrified lamas who clung to pillars and walls as if they wanted to be absorbed by them.

Very humbly and still bent in two, the Kalon Lama asked for his help. The weather had been very dry and there had been no rain for months (I was personally witness to this fact). The crops were in danger—could the spirit of Gaadong bring forth some rain? A trained lama-secretary took down the oracle's favourable reply.

Very slowly and still bowing, the minister withdrew.

After a last outburst of wild rage, the oracle collapsed, fell heavily on the ground and passed out completely. His unconscious body was picked up unceremoniously by four monk attendants and carried out of the hall.

I felt as if a high tension electric current had gone through my body, and I stumbled out of the Gaadong temple, distracted beyond words. I was stunned, stupefied by this weird ceremony, not so much by the colourful pomp as by some indefinable conviction that I had seen a real occult performance.

As we trotted back to Lhasa, the regular rhythm of my horse helped to put some order into a jumble of conflicting thoughts and nailed in my brain one conviction—I had to find out more about Tibetan occultism and psychic phenomena before leaving the Roof of the World.

I was about to go to bed at about eleven p.m. the same night when I heard the noise of a regular splashing in the garden. I rushed to the window and threw it open. Rain was pouring down in bucketfuls and thunder was rolling up the entire valley of Lhasa.

Amazing? I did not really think so. I had begun to understand by now that there is more to psychic forces than meets the eye of Western man. The performances of the oracles had opened for me the gates of a new and entrancing world which the Tibetans have explored thoroughly—a world which lies between the higher forms of religious research and the everyday preoccupations of earthly life: the mysterious world of magic and psychic forces, the universe of Yoga and of what lies beyond death.

CHAPTER XXIII

SCIENCE AND PSYCHIC REALITY

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, I sat in front of my window, watching with bewilderment the large tears pour down on Lhasa which the Gaadong oracle had apparently wrought from heaven. I started thinking about the reality of what I had seen—about the existence and manipulation of psychic forces which seems to be too often in the Western world the monopoly of frauds and charlatans.

In a private interview which I had later with the Kalon Lama, the president of the higher cabinet explained how Gaadong's mysterious power influenced the weather each year just as it had in 1947—dispersing clouds, melting hail and so on. Also how other oracles were able to forecast political events in China or Mongolia, thus helping Tibet's military operations on the border.

Such a controversial field of enquiry as the reality of psychic phenomena has to be approached very cautiously. Though Western man is becoming increasingly aware of its existence, most books which have been written on this fascinating subject do not even begin to solve its mysteries. It is not, therefore, without hesitation that I have included a chapter which does not pretend to prove anything but only to clarify the respective positions of modern science, Oriental knowledge and the mysterious universe of the psyche.

Every human being feels the need for synthesis, the need to avoid the intellectual and emotional conflicts which have puzzled Western man during the nineteenth century and which tear him apart during the twentieth: the apparent

conflict between matter and spirit, between science and mysticism. Western man thought that he had solved the problem when he had either denied the existence of the spirit and of psychic phenomena, or admitted two entirely separate universes, one of which would be unknown and out of reach during our lifetime and would remain the preserve of dogmatic religion.

In reality, Western man has postponed the problem until it has become so acute that attempts are now being made to reconcile two great branches of human knowledge—to reconcile the yogi's comprehension of the psyche with the scientist's knowledge of matter. Most Western scientists are deeply puzzled by the psychic implications of their latest theories, and as Arthur Koestler tells us:

"No honest scientist can now publish a book on physics without a metaphysical epilogue."

Western man is at last searching for this synthesis, for the integration of various unrelated or conflicting portions of human knowledge instead of denying the reality of what does not fit in his personal conception of the cosmos. Can Tibet, by any chance, contribute something to this task and provide a solution to the greatest problem man ever had to face?

For thousands of years, the Orientals have taken the existence of psychic forces for granted and it has never occurred to them to question their reality.

By accepting as a fact what could not, in those days, be proved by scientific methods and by applying to the study of psychic forces a purely logical and experimental method, the Easterners, and especially the Tibetans, were able to accumulate a vast occult knowledge which is still largely unknown to the rest of the world.

While Christianity gradually transformed itself into a group of powerful religious institutions in which practical

research into psychic matters was discouraged, in which metaphysical speculations were confined between the narrow limits set by dogmas, Buddhism and Hinduism encouraged individual or collective researches into the mysterious world of the psyche.

While faith in the dogmas was the motto of the West, complete freedom of research was the motto of the East. When the Christian œcumenical councils crushed the Gnostic believers in reincarnation and advocates of esoteric knowledge (fifth century A.D.), blind faith became the supreme argument of religion in the Christian world. Slowly and gradually, the energies of the Occident were diverted towards the physical world, and the same rational and experimental approach built up Western science which had helped to build up psychic knowledge in the East.

Yet, a basic difference exists nowadays between these two knowledges, a difference which has to be taken into account when trying to apply scientific methods to psychic research. Knowledge in the East has one aim—the discovery of Ultimate Truth. Everyone is free to choose whatever method he wishes in order to achieve this aim, whether it be a purely spiritual method of righteous and unselfish living, or the technical method of the Tibetan lamas and Indian yogis who pry curiously into the mysteries of the psychic world. But the teacher always makes sure that his prospective pupil is morally fit to be entrusted with this knowledge. This is made necessary by the great powers acquired by the student of the occult. This connection between knowledge and moral standards is the distinctive feature of Eastern science and of all esoteric teachings, a secret technique which is handed from one guru to another by word of mouth or written down in such symbolic terms as to be incomprehensible to the reader who is not initiated.

Scientific knowledge in the West was not made dependent upon any moral concept. It is a cold, logical construction of the human brain in which religious or moral considerations have no place and which stands apart from man, defining in mathematical terms the approximate relationship between various physical elements. It is an esoteric knowledge, open to everyone regardless of his spiritual achievements and the aim of which is man's domination over nature.

Western scepticism faced with psychic reality is understandable. Whatever strange, supranormal powers may be possessed by some Tibetans cannot be displayed for the sake of astonishing naïve onlookers as a new engine is exhibited in front of a crowd of potential customers. Furthermore, modern science is beginning to discover that there are limits beyond which man cannot observe a phenomenon without altering and distorting what he seeks to understand. The same is true of psychic problems which lie beyond physics; the application of scientific methods to the discovery and explanation of psychic phenomena destroys the very phenomena Western man seeks to observe. This is not to say that all the mysterious occurrences one observes in Tibet cannot be explained scientifically. The physical merges imperceptibly into the psychic and the purely physical aspect of some of these occurrences are based on a pragmatical knowledge which will soon be within the reach of science.

Tibetans take the existence of a psychic universe for granted and all their subsequent researches are based on this premise. The fact that in their everyday life the Tibetans, and to a large extent most Asiatics, have a far less precise notion of time or space than the Westerners partly explains the greater ease with which they explore psychic phenomena and move round mentally in a universe which is precisely devoid of

time or space. Thus, by a different road, the Tibetans have reached some of the metaphysical conclusions which modern science is now discovering.

According to several conversations which I had with Tibetans who had a real knowledge of modern science and philosophy, the most recent scientific discoveries and theories are merely confirming what the Orientals have known for thousands of years. Now that the scientific conception of the physical universe based on Galileo and Newton has crumbled, it is necessary to sum up very briefly the metaphysical implications of the two great theories on which modern science is built.

These two great theories are the Quantum Theory, dealing with the constitution of matter and energy, and Einstein's Theory of Relativity which covers modern conception of time, space and the universe. The basic notion now is that modern science has at last reached definite limits, barriers beyond which it cannot possibly proceed. It is slowly dawning on the scientist that beyond the physical universe there is another universe into which the physical world gradually merges and in which scientific laws and methods are worthless.

This startling discovery was highlighted in 1927 when Heisenberg set up his Principle of Uncertainty. For the first time, science found an obstacle which could not be overcome, not only because of a temporary inadequacy of scientific methods but also because an ultimate limit to scientific progress had been reached.

Besides limiting and gradually narrowing the field of human knowledge in which modern science can operate, the two great theories have built up a revolutionary universe in which a nineteenth-century scientist would be completely lost.

Matter is now recognized as being nothing more than condensed energy. But the constitution of energy itself is still in doubt—no one knows whether it is made of waves or of particles. This and the new discoveries of Quantum physics have destroyed two basic props of the old science: causality and determinism. Here we have to pause and remark that both these props are the main elements of Karma, the Oriental law of cause and effect. How is it, then, that the East was able to build up a metaphysical knowledge of laws which were discovered thousands of years later in the West, applied to physical science for centuries and now discarded by modern scientists as inadequate?

The reason probably is that the Oriental's conception of causality and determinism involves the psychic universe as well as the physical world. Modern science was bound to discover one day that these laws did not apply to physics alone so long as the existence of psychic reality was denied.

Oriental knowledge often points out that the physical world in which we live is nothing but illusion, has no reality except in the human mind. As the Tibetans are fond of ever repeating:

"Nature is but a mirage which exists in the mind, springs from the mind, sinks into the mind."

Modern science reverted to this idea when it adopted a mathematical description of nature and gradually discarded the world of sense-perception. Modern science now agrees that there is only one reality on which everything we know is based—the mind. The old duality between mind and matter is at last destroyed since matter as we know it is nothing but the product of human thought.

Another important scientific notion is the idea that time and space are part of the same four-dimensional time-space

continuum and that time gradually merges into space until one reaches the speed of light. This had been found out by Tibetan lamas long ago. They contend that this time-space continuum in which we live is just the edge of a much vaster world of which few Westerners are aware—the physical-psychic continuum, the world of *sangsara* as opposed to nirvana, the world of the Wheel of Existence.

Therefore, psychic forces are not wholly and completely independent from physical forces, any more than time is independent from space. The psychic world is only the other side of the material world, and in both, Thought is the only reality. Einstein proved long ago that time and space are nothing more than forms of intuition which cannot be divorced from the one great element on which Tibetan Yoga is based—Human Consciousness.

If we look at a colour spectrum, we are struck by the very small portion of it which is visible to the human eye. We may deny the existence of psychic forces, but can we deny the existence of gamma rays or cosmic rays simply because we cannot perceive them through our limited senses? Modern science has finally been able to discover them and put them to practical use. If the human eye was a thousand times more powerful than it is, not only would it see cosmic rays but also unknown psychic waves which are emitted by the human brain and on which telepathy is based. If man's five senses were more developed, a part of what is psychic to him would enter what he believes to be reality—it would become physical and fall under the control of his intellect.

In fact, reality as we perceive it through our limited senses is nothing more than a very small portion of the cosmic world. Every improvement of the mathematical symbols of science widens the gulf between the world as detected by machines and man the perceiver. This is the result of a lack of

balance between Western man's external effort to dominate nature and his refusal to search within himself for Supreme Reality by the same experimental methods which he uses in science. Modern science has reached an impasse and by admitting the sole reality of the mind it has reached definite limits beyond which it cannot possibly progress. It can, of course, improve indefinitely within these limits and endlessly increase man's mastery over nature—but metaphysically, it has had to halt in front of ultimate barriers, a border beyond which scientific methods are worthless, beyond which the human brain no longer operates.

The most important boundaries have now been reached with Einstein's General Theory of Relativity and his new conception of a finite and yet unbounded universe. For the use of the ordinary layman, Sir James Jeans has defined this new universe thus:

"A soap bubble with corrugations on its surface is perhaps the best representation, in terms of simple and familiar materials, of the new universe revealed to us by the Theory of Relativity. The universe is not the interior of the soap bubble but its surface and we must always remember that while the surface of the soap bubble has only two dimensions, the universe bubble has four—three dimensions of space and one of time. And the substance out of which this bubble is blown, the soap film, is empty space welded on to empty time."

This empty space welded on to empty time characterizes the psychic cosmos—a world which cannot be defined and studied scientifically since the human brain cannot operate in it but which can be apprehended intuitively, a world which is not billions of light-years away , t is all around us, a world in which the only reality is waves of thought-consciousness. We can then conceive that, on the edge of this psychic world, the crystallization of thought-consciousness has produced the

physical universe in a small portion of which we spend our short earthly lives.

It is now easier to understand the basic difference between the introverted Tibetan yogi who can see the entire psycho-physical continuum, the real universe from the inside and the scientist who calculates it from the outside. Only the yogi who has reached a certain degree of psychic insight, who has been able to still his mechanical brain and develop his superintuition, only he can see that the universe is the non-dimensional amorphous continuum which modern science is slowly discovering and in which the only reality is the action of the mind.

Since the mind is the sole reality, from both the yogi's and the scientist's viewpoint, the study of human thought becomes essential.

Coinciding with the first cracks in the materialistic conception of the universe and the birth of what was to become relativity, Western man has approached the problem of the mind, not from within as the yogi but medically from the outside. The gradual discovery and study of the subconscious has led to the creation of an increasingly important branch of medicine—psychoanalysis. Starting from a purely materialistic viewpoint with Sigmund Freud, the most important deviation of psychoanalysis has gradually reverted to a meta-psychological explanation of human behaviour under the guidance of Freud's most brilliant disciple, Carl Jung.

In spite of its undisputable usefulness and the real help which psychoanalysis has rendered in the past forty years, Western knowledge of the mind is still amazingly childish. What the Orient has been studying experimentally for thousands of years, we Occidentals have tried to know in one or two generations. The wisest among the psychoanalysts finally discovered that, ultimately, all psychological problems are

eventually reduced to finding a religious outlook on life. Gradually, the most eminent psychoanalysts also realize that the East knows infinitely more about the mind than we can ever hope to understand with our intellect and our scientific methods. This has been made clear by Carl Jung:

"Psychoanalysis itself and the lines of thought to which it gives rise—surely a distinctly Western development—are only a beginner's attempt compared to what is an immemorial art in the East."

This is from the man who is considered to be one of the leading psychoanalysts in the world. He then adds:

"It seems to be quite true that the East is at the bottom of the spiritual change we are passing through today. Only this East is not a Tibetan monastery full of mahatmas but, in a sense, lies within us. It is from the depths of our own psychic life that new spiritual forms will arise."

Carl Jung is certainly right when he mentions that the East is within all of us. However, he overlooks the fact that it is only in a Tibetan monastery that Western man can find the one thing which cannot be replaced: *thabs*, the Tibetan method, the technique and the example. No one will dispute that the East is within us since we all bathe, consciously or unconsciously, in a psychic atmosphere which is the Oriental yogi's playground. But only the yogi can see it and only he can teach others how to start on the long arduous road to complete knowledge of the mind, to psychic phenomena and, ultimately, to Transcendental Consciousness.

CHAPTER XXIV

BEYOND DEATH

My thirst for the new type of psychic insight which the oracles had disclosed to my mind was unquenchable. I had to find out all I could about Tibetan occultism and secret knowledge of psychic matters during the limited period of time which had been allotted to me on the Roof of the World. My quest was not made easier by the fact that it had to be conducted alongside my numerous political interviews, social parties and other activities in Lhasa.

The real Tibet I was searching for was not out in the open. It was not in the magnificent temples and palaces, in the colourful bazaars, in the happy and carefree life of its farmers or in the entrancing charm of Lhasa's social life.

Real Tibet transcends politics and economics; it is invisible, beyond sense-perception, beyond intellect. It is the mysterious land of the psyche, of what lies beyond death, a universe to which some Tibetans have the key and which their subtle soul seems to have explored as thoroughly as Western scientists have explored our physical universe.

Every lama I met, every monastery and temple I visited (and God knows there were many) became potential sources of information. Those who knew little about the occult—laymen and the majority of the monks—were always pleased to talk about it; but they were vague and their information was not reliable. The few lamas who knew, on the other hand, were extremely reticent. According to them, I had been allowed to see the trances of two oracles and, apparently, that

should have been enough to satisfy my curiosity. Instead, it had only whetted my thirst for knowledge.

Lamas who are both learned and willing to talk in certain circumstances exist, however, and thanks to them a general pattern of Tibetan occultism gradually emerged in my mind and it became, in time, a coherent picture of a portion of human knowledge which is still largely unknown in the Western world.

The awe-inspiring landscape of Tibet, the severity of the climate and remoteness of its valleys, the majestic silence and solemn peace in which the Roof of the World is bathed were certainly responsible for the existence of a psychic knowledge which is an outgrowth of mystical Buddhism.

Psychologically, Tibetans are very different from Indians. Their religions are closely related, their mystical literatures are more or less similar. Tibet is, in many ways, the spiritual daughter of India. But whereas the sweltering jungles and sun-scorched plains of India were conducive to philosophy and deep spirituality, the vigorous and hard climate of Tibet bred a type of action-loving man which is more akin to the Occidental.

The tough Tibetan is as mystical as the Indian. At the same time, he is gay and humorous. He is often sceptical and wants to experience before believing. More than once, I have seen some lama who was reputed to be a master of the occult laugh uproariously at Western childishness when told about psychic researches and experiments in Europe or America. He relies a great deal more than the Indian on mere technique or cleverness, on psychic experiment rather than righteous living and spiritual achievement. He has in no way forsaken the search for Supreme Truth. But, and in this respect he is closer to Western man, he sometimes enjoys for their own sake the unusual powers over nature or over his

fellow human beings which he derives from his mysterious knowledge. Also, he has to fight a constant battle against the climate on his windswept, frozen plateaus and many of the most elementary psychic exercises are devised to nullify nature's crushing weight. This reliance on technique often goes to extremes and it is a common saying in Tibet that he who knows the ropes can be comfortable even in hell.

Locked up in countless secret libraries in some out-of-the-way lamaseries, there are a great many treatises of which foreigners have never heard, worn out by centuries and by thousands of studious lamas who try hard to get easy access to the mysterious beyond. Nothing is more impressive, in the centre of this majestic but terrifying country, than to see a solitary lamasery perched on a rocky wind-swept spur, isolated from the rest of mankind. As darkness falls, the windows light up, flaming torches go up and down the steps. While ragdongs spread their deep rumblings over the barren countryside, the mysterious incantations of hundreds of guttural voices seem to remind the rare and always intruding foreigner that here is one of the countless Tibetan laboratories where occult forces are tested and manipulated, that behind these massive walls, behind the fumes of butter-lamps and frankincense is a knowledge which might change the fate of mankind.

And yet, the foreigner is not welcome in these mysterious workshops where white and black magic of the old Pon wizards of pre-Buddhist days, the sorcery of the numerous Red Hat sects and the purer forms of Tibetan Yoga of the gelukpas are all mixed up in some fabulous psychic cauldron.

Psychic knowledge in Tibet is an amplification of Buddhism. It is believed to be an esoteric Buddhism, the yoga teaching of Gotama himself which was handed down through

generations by word of mouth. Though many orthodox Buddhists deny this, Gotama's disciples did not write down every word of the great master; the secret technique of the "short path" remained the precious possession of a few gurus who refused to publicize a knowledge which might become dangerous in the hands of immoral or weak men.

According to the lamas *gomchens*, the human soul or thought-consciousness is a temporary and everchanging mass of psychic energy which wraps up our subconscious mind, a dark recess in which are stored all memories and emotions, not only of the present life but of all past existences as well. Man's earthly life could be compared to a physical arch joining two oceans of the psychic universe. The young child at the foot of the arch still bathes in a psychic atmosphere; he can see many things to which an adult is blind and, Tibetans claim, can often remember fragments of his past lives. But as he grows up, the child loses this contact and his earthly connections grow stronger. His mechanical brain develops physically, his logic and reason increase often at the expense of intuition. The healthier he is physically, the weaker are his psychic gifts. He is, then, at the summit of the arch. Those who, without any special training and with no knowledge of Yoga, are proficient in telepathy and clairvoyance are usually people who are physically sick. For instance, Tibetan oracles all have some serious ailment. On the other hand, the healthy disciple who devotes his life to meditation and Yoga practices can, of course, reach the same psychic insight and far beyond. But he is then the master of his psychic powers instead of being their victim and they are just stepping stones towards greater spiritual achievements.

Towards the end of his life, man grows physically weaker and gradually sinks back into the psychic universe. Time and space lose their precision and the reality which they had

during his more mature years. Just before death, he can have glimpses of the mysterious world into which he is about to enter. It can also happen at any time of life that a man in danger has a short feeling of impending death. It is not rare, then, that the whole of his life projects itself through his mind in a split second. The lamas gomchens explain this by saying that the victim has temporarily fallen into a psychic state in which all notions of time and space are temporarily abolished; the gates of his subconscious mind, in which every single detail of his life has been registered, are temporarily opened and closed up again as soon as the feeling of impending death disappears.

Every human being leads a double life. While we are awake, and our freedom of action is complete within the framework set by Karma, we can, through our daily actions and behaviour, change the actual composition or nature of our soul. The only purpose of being incarnate on earth or in other worlds is that it is the only state in which our soul modifies its contents. Matter is the necessary catalysis through which our thought-consciousness must pass in order to grow and eventually dissolve itself into nirvana.

We enter the second part of our double life when we slither into the dream world of sleep, into *rmilam* as the Tibetans call it. Our soul, our thought-consciousness, to use the Tibetan expression, is then more or less detached from its physical envelope, more or less dematerialized according to the depth of our sleep. Our soul becomes the slave of its actual composition; its evolution and growth stops, and, in this static condition, it is out of the control of our will power. We are powerless to influence our thoughts or feelings and only the long and gradual training of Yoga during our awakened condition can ultimately bring the unknown disorder of our subconscious mind under complete control. Only the

psychic training of the lamas can merge consciousness and unconsciousness and eventually do away with sleep altogether.

Our soul has in fact escaped from the time-space world and floats partly in a timeless and spaceless universe, in the psychic universe. This makes for a certain incoherence in our memory of past dreams when we try to fit into the four dimensions of our physical universe a jumble of disordered thoughts and emotional sequences which do not fit in. This is, of course, substantiated by the current notion that very long dreams occur in a split second. Actually they do not last even a split-second since they are timeless and simultaneous, to the extent of course that the sleep is deep and the dream as far beyond the influence of physical sensation as a dream can be. But however deep the sleep, our thought-consciousness is always linked to the physical world by some umbilical cord which only death can sever. Through this umbilical cord, our dreams are partly filled with material preoccupations which make up the study of Western psychoanalysts who neglect, however, the purely psychic side of sleep. In this state, our consciousness can easily contact and link up with other consciousnesses at the far end of the earth or in other periods of time. Forewarning of events or immediate knowledge of an occurrence far away in space is common in the dreams of psychically gifted people.

The study of dreams and the subconscious mind has led the lamas, quite naturally, to speculate on what lies beyond death. Tibetans always yearn for experiments and this was the first field which opened itself to their efforts.

Nothing illustrates better the contempt which Tibetans have for their physical body after death has taken place and their concern for the fate of their thought-consciousness than their burial ceremonies. In order to study at first hand their

customs and their theories concerning the mysterious beyond, I went frequently to an important cemetery which lies on the outskirts of Lhasa and entered into conversation with the lamas who presided at these funerals. Fortunately for me, a great many burials take place during the summer; most ceremonies are all at once fascinating and perfectly disgusting.

The corpse is brought along in a huge basin or cauldron carried on the shoulders of four sturdy men, followed by tearful relatives. The well-trussed-up body is thrown on a large slab of polished stone and handed over to a group of *ragyabpas*, a special tribe of morticians who are, socially, the lowest of the low in Lhasa and who have the repulsive monopoly of disposing of corpses. With the very decisive gestures of well-trained butchers, the ragyabpas cut off the limbs and take out the heart, lungs and entrails which they spread out on the stone. While the mourners chant some heart-rending psalmodies, a specialized ragyabpa whistles to a few vultures, every one of which he knows well. To the elder vulture he gives the heart and distributes the remains to his bird companions.

When the vultures' appetites are satisfied, packs of growling mastiffs are unchained and let loose on the truncated corpse of what was once a man. Meanwhile, the cauldron in which the body was brought to the cemetery is washed and appetizing buttered tea is prepared in it for the gay relatives.

The end of physical life seems to hold no terror for the average Tibetan. This is partly due to the existence of an extraordinary treatise: the *Bardo Thödol*, the Tibetan Book of the Dead. This fantastic directory is supposed to contain the doctrine by which a satisfactory rebirth may be attained without meditation, a guide-book which teaches the deceased to know his way about the mysterious *bardo*. This bardo is the psychic universe in which the soul wanders between its incarnations. It is the amazing technique which constitutes one of

the great originalities of the Tibetan. It is a real science which they have mastered and which dispels, for the initiate, many mysteries of the afterdeath.

A certain class of lamas specialized in the weird study of the bardo: the *delogs*, who travel beyond death and are alleged to come back into the material world to inform the living of what they can expect in the mysterious beyond.

In order to do so, they put themselves into a yoga trance and, according to a secret technique which is known as *kumbhak*, slowly sever the connection between their physical body and their consciousness. All signs of life disappear—the blood stops flowing, the heart stops beating and breathing is altogether suspended. They can remain in a state of complete catalepsy for periods of days, months and even years.

The amazing *Bardo Thödol* describes the findings of these lama explorers, as well as the technique by which it is possible to guide the soul or thought-consciousness of those who are about to depart. This book is not only the result of the findings of the delogs. A great deal of knowledge was derived from lamas who, while in the process of dying, dictated the various stages of the process. When they finally became unable to speak they went on communicating telepathically with their disciples.

Death is not a sudden but a gradual process which can last, sometimes, as long as three or four days. All the experiments concord in dividing and summarizing the physical sensations accompanying death into three distinct stages, which, according to the lama Kazi Dawasandup's translation, are:

1. A physical sensation of pressure like that of earth sinking into water.
2. A physical sensation of clammy coldness as though the body were immersed in water which gradually merges into that of feverish heat as of water sinking into fire.

3. A feeling as though the body was being blown to atoms like that of fire sinking into air.

The life of the soul or thought-consciousness after physical death has occurred is a succession of visions of thought-forms which have no more reality than our earthly life. They are hallucinations similar to those of our dreams, subjective visions corresponding to the intimate religious beliefs held by the deceased during his earthly life. It is his subconscious mind let loose into an intermediate psychic world called the bardo.

The man who has had no psychic training during his lifetime conceives these hallucinations, the world in which he now finds himself, to be real. Only he who has reached a high degree of knowledge during his brief passage on earth can understand that they are subjective visions with no intrinsic reality.

Life after death is a dream state in which the soul often imagines that it still has a physical body, just as we, in our dreams, always think that we are wide awake and living our everyday physical life. This fact has given rise to the numerous funeral rites in Tibet in which the living make the greatest efforts to persuade the dead that they are really dead. They are exhorted not to come back to their old haunts and to stop bothering the living. They are advised to get started on their long and tedious journey through the bardo.

But why is it that the deceased often come back to their old haunts and cannot conceive that they are dead? This, say the Tibetan lamas, happens when they did not receive the necessary guidance at the time of death. The aim of all yoga teachings in this respect is to preserve a continuity of the consciousness during the whole process of dying so that the soul may enter the bardo consciously. Under no circumstances should the dying man or woman be allowed to faint

or fall asleep, in which case the thread is broken. When this happens, the deceased has no way of knowing where he is when his consciousness returns to him in the bardo and he seeks desperately to resume his former life.

A specialized lama, the *hphobo* or Extractor of the Consciousness, assists the subject and helps him to liberate himself consciously from his physical envelope. He keeps him awake until the last moment by applying some odd physical pressure on the throbbing of the arteries. Among the many apertures in the body through which consciousness flows out at the time of death, the Brahmanic Aperture offers the shortest agony, the quickest and most desirable death. This Brahmanic Aperture is the sagittal suture on the crown of the head where the two parietal bones articulate. In order to enlarge the opening, the hphobos train themselves for years in the art of pronouncing two words: *heeg-phat*. This is part of the unbelievably complicated knowledge of the right sound, which is based on the science of mantras or words of power. In it are set the laws of vibration and frequency of sound waves according to which each physical organism has a special rate of vibration under the impact of which it disintegrates.

Once death is an accomplished fact and the separation between body and thought-consciousness is completed, the hphobo starts guiding the soul by means of telepathic messages through the meanderings of the bardo. He tries to uncoil the subconscious contents of the soul by explaining to the deceased that his visions are purely subjective and the result of his behaviour during his past lives.

According to the delogs, the passage through the bardo proceeds as follows: Just after death, the soul has a lightning vision of Supreme Reality and a chance of complete liberation from the Wheel of Existence, from the sangsara (finite world

of the Wheel of Existence, the reverse of nirvana). But the weight of Karma, of the past deeds, usually drags the soul back into the dark recesses of the bardo and the wandering starts.

Under the strange astral light which permeates the ether of the psychic universe, the deceased retrogrades step by step into lower and lower states of consciousness. Each step downward is followed by fainting and temporary loss of consciousness. The lamas compare the wanderings of the deceased in the bardo to the throw of a ball which reaches the greatest height at the first bound, each succeeding bound being lower until the ball comes to remain still. When the soul reaches that state of repose, the force of Karma has spent itself. The soul can no longer progress, it cannot change its substance. Only a new reincarnation will permit a resumption of its evolution. In the soul grows the desire for a new physical life, for rebirth. The mass of thought-consciousness of which the soul is made eventually crystallizes and is condensed into matter. A womb is entered. Reincarnation is at last accomplished.

Reincarnation as conceived by the Tibetans need not be on this earth. Learned gomchens assert that the condensation of thought into matter can occur in millions of different stars or planets and under forms which could hardly be called physical, much less human. According to them, our physical senses are so limited that we might not even perceive their existence if, by some unknown process, we were able to visit these distant worlds.

When I talked to these withered lamas who had spent a lifetime meditating about the afterdeath, I was struck by the breathtaking scope and the mysterious logic of their vision. In the all-pervading mystic atmosphere of Tibet reincarnation

became so easy to apprehend intuitively and yet so difficult to explain intellectually. However, behind their unverifiable theories on the beyond-death lies yoga, the fabulous method creating the instrument with which to explore and conquer man's mind, and with it the entire universe.

CHAPTER XXV

THE WONDERS OF TIBETAN YOGA

"TELL ME, RIMPOCHE, I have heard that you know a great deal about the occult. Is it true that here in Tibet there exists a kind of psychic knowledge which remains secret, unknown to the rest of the world?"

Blazing eyes watched me keenly out of two narrow slits set in a broad-cheekboned face whose deeply chiselled features were as immobile as if they belonged to a bronze statue. The purple-robed Precious One and I were sitting on the flat roof of Duk Ralung, the Dragon monastery, watching the sun set slowly behind the bluish jagged peaks on the far horizon. I had watched the same sunset several months before from this very lamasery, when I was on my way up to Lhasa. My mind had travelled a great deal since then and had grown into accepting notions which I would never have dared contemplate after a scientific education in the Western world.

The Rimpoche laughed contemptuously:

"You white men from the West have conquered the earth with your science. Every nation in the world, except Tibet, is following in your footsteps and copying your customs and techniques. What more do you want?"

Slightly irritated, I replied:

"After two world wars and countless social and political upheavals, we have become humble enough to admit our shortcomings. We are prepared to give and indeed are giving to the world the benefit of our science and industrial technique. In return, we ask for the special light which you Tibetans pretend to have found and now conceal. If we

Westerners admit that we have gone too far towards a purely materialistic approach to the problems of life, why could you not admit that you have selfishly exaggerated in the other direction? What good has your spiritual insight done to the great majority of your people?"

A long silence ensued. The Rimpoche's face remained impassive. I had no way of knowing whether my argument had impressed him in the least.

He finally sighed:

"The world is sick, more sick than it has ever been and you Westerners are more responsible for this than we are. It is difficult to bridge the gap between you and us and yet it has to be done. Wisdom as we know it is not for the many but for the few who seek it. You Occidentals are only anxious to increase your material power over nature. You do not search for truth. What you would call our supranormal powers are not developed for their own sake but as mediums towards greater understanding of ultimate reality."

I quickly retorted.

"What about the oracles who are exploited by the Tibetan government for political purposes? Did not Gotama forbid such things?" I hastily pulled out the small Gospel of Buddha which I always carried around with me and, having found the short citation I was looking for, read under the moonlight:

"Stargazing and astrology, forecasting lucky or unfortunate events by signs, prognosticating good or evil, all these are things forbidden."

The Rimpoche laughed again, more friendly this time:

"A subtle difference must be made between the man who, because of an accident of heredity, is endowed by birth with some psychic powers and the lama who obtains the same powers through meditation and hard training. We consider that the first class of psychic power, that which is given by

nature and which is usually paid for by the physical disabilities of the gifted man can be used for material purposes. No psychic power acquired through personal effort can be used for earthly ambitions, however lofty the ambitions might be. You can understand, now, why the Tibetan government uses its oracles. How could Tibet with her small and ill-equipped army have defended herself against Chinese aggression for forty years without some help from the occult?"

Another silence followed. I thought to myself that it was indeed a miracle that Tibet had been able to maintain its independence with such small physical means. And yet, the Roof of the World could not always be protected in such a way. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama had not been able to prevent the Younghusband expedition, though his oracles had predicted the precise date and unfortunate outcome of this foreign invasion long before it actually occurred.

I looked at the Precious One. He was motionless, concentrated on some deep thought. With his dark immobile face, he looked the image of an enigmatic Buddha.

The staircase leading up to the roof suddenly creaked and a young lama slithered silently towards us carrying a pile of wooden blocks, books probably issued in the great printing establishments of Narthang. I was surprised that this set of books should have been brought up without the Rimpoche even asking for them; I doubted very much if he had asked for them before this interview started as he had been reluctant to start the conversation anyway. Was he going to translate and comment on some passages of these rare and partly secret documents?

He started talking slowly and deliberately in his colourless, metallic voice, carefully choosing and weighing every word:

"Our knowledge of what you call the occult is the result of thousands of years of research and experiments. A great deal

of that knowledge is here, enclosed in these books which my disciple has just brought up. Such books as the metaphysical *Great Centre* or the *Prajna Paramita*, technical books like *Gampopa's Supreme Path*, the *Epitome of the great Symbol* and many more would give you an insight into psychic matters which would be far beyond anything you could learn in India. I know, because I have lived and studied for many years in the great holy land of the south. The rest of our knowledge is still the secret of living gurus who are prepared to impart it only to a few chosen disciples and, this, only by word of mouth. A large part of this science is even so transcendental that it cannot be put into words and is communicated from guru to disciples by means of telepathy."

Though reluctant to break his trend of thought, I could not check an impulse to ask him:

"But, Rimpoche, if you are searching for supreme enlightenment, what is the use of all these clever techniques, psychic experiments and acquisition of supranormal powers? Would you not achieve the same results by observing moral precepts, righteous living, compassion and spiritual achievement as enjoined by Gotama?"

"What you say is partly true. But the acquisition of psychic powers is only a step towards supreme enlightenment. The mystic searching for supreme reality, searching for God as you Westerners would put it, has to tear himself away from the physical world. On the way to supreme reality, he has to travel across the psychic universe. We, in Tibet, have had the weakness to linger too often in the universe of psychic phenomena. This has caused a few Tibetan gurus to forget all about their search for truth and eventually turn to evil. But to most of us, psychic powers are only a means to greater spiritual achievement."

The sun had set long ago behind the crenellated mountains

in the distance, as if swallowed by a huge rocky jaw behind which the star-speckled universe was slowly rising. The shrill lament of conch-shells and the rolling thunder of ragdongs echoed through the barren valley as darkness fell with incredible swiftness.

"Rimpoche, can you tell me about yourself, about your initiation to the occult?"

The Precious One looked at me or rather through me once more. His gleaming eyes bored into my subconscious mind which he surely knew far better than I did, weighing my Karma, probably searching for sincerity and unselfish yearning for enlightenment. After a time, he spoke:

"Listen carefully and do not interrupt. I will tell you what I can; it will at least give you a general idea about the occult in Tibet. It might incite you to start your own search for supreme truth. Remember that knowledge of truth is not a thing you can read about in books or even in Buddha's sayings. It is a thing to be experienced by yourself.

"When I was eight years old, my parents sent me to a monastery. They were too poor to educate me and a relative of ours, an old decrepit lama, offered to look after me in his lamasery. I learned very little and followed the bad example of many monks who vegetate, thinking only about games and food. One night, I had a strange dream which compelled me to seek for a guru. This celebrated teacher lived in an isolated hermitage in the neighbourhood of Sakya monastery.

"I started early the next morning and travelled for more than two months before reaching the secluded cave in which the ascetic guru lived. I walked up to him, made obeisance and told him about my dream. I humbly begged him to accept me as his disciple.

"Now, I have since then travelled outside Tibet and I have been able to compare religions. I have seen Christians

and Moslems, Parsee and Sikhs, Hindus and Jains. You Westerners do not know what real freedom is. Your dogmas are set and imposed on you from the outside, your religious beliefs became frozen centuries ago. Your religions no longer come from within; they belong to the outside world. Our Eastern knowledge is never clamped down from the outside but has to grow inside us, under the guidance and with the help of the guru. None of our sects is exclusive or pretends that it has the monopoly of truth. Buddhists and Hindus all agree that there are many paths to salvation and each individual is free to choose whichever he prefers. Climate, geography, race and psychology condition the growth of religions. They adapt themselves to the emotional needs of their devotees and are all, basically, as good, one as the other.

"But your Western faiths, each one pretending to be the only true church, have not grown alongside your physical science. As a result, the gap between your paralysed religions and your growing scientific knowledge is widening day by day. In order to solve this problem, many of your scientists and philosophers have tried to deny the reality of a psychic world. They sought refuge in a dreary materialism which is not only tragic but also illogical and even childish. Are you surprised then, that there should be an increasing disorder in your minds?"

I could not help interrupting him:

"This is why I am here, Rimpoche, asking you to tell me how the gap might be bridged with the help of your Oriental knowledge."

He replied swiftly:

"And that is why I go to the trouble of telling you what I can. It is only because I have travelled throughout Asia and seen for myself the increasing chaos that I am willing to explain all this."

The Rimpoche went on talking slowly and deliberately. When we reached some technical description, he unfolded the printed sheets contained between the two wooden blocks and swiftly glanced through them. I did not feel at all tired and though the cold was intense we remained on the roof of the temple, under the star-studded sky.

"I was free to choose whatever doctrine and guru I wished. On his part, my teacher was free to accept or reject me, as he pleased. I had to wait eight months during which the guru observed me keenly. He sought to find out if I was normally fit to become an initiate. When he felt content on that score, he also gauged my physical and mental strength, trying to discover if I were capable of that complete self-surrender to the guru and of the annihilation of the ego which is the mark of all true seekers. You may be surprised by such persistency on my part. But the personal relationship between guru and disciple is essential. It cannot be put into words, because words are products of the intellect and the guru's teaching is concerned with silencing the intellect, with the development of Transcendental Consciousness. This personal relationship is irreplaceable and, being personal, is secret. That is initiation.

"One day, at last, he accepted me and my initiation started. I had to put up with the most ascetic type of life. I locked myself up in a *tsam*, a small wind-swept hermitage hanging on to a granite cliff near my guru's dwelling. I ate only once a day and the sole luxury which the guru permitted was chang, in limited quantity. I became a *tsamspa*, a student of the occult.

"My training started with the basic teachings of Yoga, a word which signifies both meditation and link—link between matter and spirit, between man's animal instincts and his Transcendental Consciousness. Whereas Indian Yoga can be

divided into three main branches—Hatha Yoga which teaches mastery over the body, Laya Yoga which deals with mastery over the mind and Raja Yoga which leads ultimately to the knowledge of reality or Samadhi, our Tibetan Yoga is more complicated and deals far more with the development of psycho-physical powers.

"The basic idea is that thought-processes and breathing processes are interdependent. Therefore, by mastering the technique of breath regulation, the flow of thoughts passing through the mind is gradually disciplined and brought under control. As we say in Tibet: *Breath is the courser, and thought the rider*.

"The second step is the gradual weeding out of unnecessary thoughts so as to achieve one-pointedness, the perfect concentration of the mind on one idea. When that has been mastered, a further step is taken by applying Samadhi Yoga: the mood of non-thought formation, the complete emptying of the mind. The rational, logical and mechanical brain which digests, distributes and distorts our apprehension of external things is completely stilled. The non-trained mind is like a stormy lake. Yoga dismisses the wind and suppresses the waves, leaving the lake as calm as a mirror and transparent enough to let us see our true self at the bottom. This allows for an absolute free-play of superintuition which enables the yogi to penetrate consciously into the psychic world.

"A great many years of concentrated and exhausting work are needed to achieve the required degree of mental power and many if not most *tsàmspas* never even approach it. Others are naturally gifted in this respect and may have already gone part of the way before starting their training; these are the most likely to succeed in the higher forms of Yoga. I cannot help recalling one outstanding example of great mental power in the Western world—that of Napoleon,

whose biography I read long ago and one of the few among your Western personalities who was known to be able to empty his mind of all thoughts. He used to compare his brain to a huge chest of drawers in which his vast and diversified knowledge was stored. He could pull out any drawer at will, jump immediately from one subject to another and, by closing all the drawers, create a complete vacuum in his mind. But in this state, Napoleon did not try to acquire any psychic powers, being unaware of their existence. He simply fell asleep. Napoleon's mental power was only a small fraction of that of an adept at Samadhi Yoga, even though his brain was a far better physical machine. He could only control his conscious mind whereas a yogi has complete control of his subconsciousness and has unlocked the gates of intense meditation's supreme reward: Transcendental Consciousness."

"The practical results of Yoga training soon manifest themselves. We Tibetans have long searched for the acquisition of supranormal powers, though not for their own sake, since they are, if misused, impediments to spiritual progress. As you probably know, the most popular and widespread psychic power is *tummo*. Though incredible to you, tummo is the feat of lamas who can produce an internal heat which enables them to spend entire winters in a state of complete nakedness, without any fire, at altitudes ranging from 12,000 to 20,000 feet. The acquisition of this internal heat was my first accomplishment.

"Tummo is based on the creation of a psycho-physical warmth which is obtained by the extraction of *prana* or Vital Force, an invisible psychic fluid, from the inexhaustible pranic reservoir of nature—just as our lungs extract oxygen from the physical atmosphere. This is done after the subject has mastered the art of controlling breathing processes and

thought-concentration. After the extraction of prana from the psychic atmosphere, this vital force races through an invisible network of channels spreading throughout the human body. These channels or *tsas* are the psychic counterpart of our nervous system.

"The chief nerve or *median tsa* is situated in the hollow of the spinal column and is interconnected with *chakras* or nerve centres. Prana is stored in the chakras as electricity is stored in a battery and remains there until called upon to start the process of tummo. When the nerve centres are awakened and uncoiled, starting with the lowest or root-support of the median tsa which is situated in the perineum, prana starts flowing upward and transmutes the generative fluid into a subtle but formidable energy. It sets in motion the other nerve centres: sex, navel, heart, throat and the sixth which is situated between the eyebrows. It finally reaches the seventh, the brain, which is the supreme chakra: the Thousand-Petalled Lotus. The psycho-physical heat is then produced and starts warming up the entire body.

"After having trained for four years under the guidance of my guru and received the *angkur* or empowerment from him, I went one windy night in winter to a very remote and solitary spot where I tested my newly-acquired power. I sat stark naked on the snow, near the frozen lake of Teltung. Assuming the usual Buddha-wise posture, I started my thought-concentration process, breathing out rhythmically all feelings and thoughts which were not related to tummo, gradually visualizing the transformed prana racing up the tsas, from chakra to chakra, until it reached the Thousand-Petalled Lotus in my brain. I then visualized the median tsa as increasing gradually in size until it filled my whole body and had become a huge funnel filled with a blazing fire fanned by my breath. After a time, I was no longer conscious of

my body and the tsa had enlarged itself until it had become an ocean of fire and flames lashed by a raging hurricane.

"My guru nearby then broke the ice and dipped a blanket into the frozen water. This blanket was wrapped around my shoulders and dried in a few minutes. While the snow melted around my naked body, more drenched blankets were applied on my skin and dried in the same way. It often becomes a matter of pride among initiates to accumulate a great many dryings of blankets in one single night.

"Though the heating process did not last longer than the trance in the first few years of my training, I eventually acquired it as a permanent and automatic function. Now, I can if I wish do entirely without fire or clothes."

"By the time I had mastered tummo, I became proficient in the art of telepathy or thought-transmission without physical means. My entire training was conducted telepathically; as we say in Tibet, I could send and receive messages 'on the wind.' A few hours ago, for instance, when my disciple brought these books, he acted instantly on my telepathic message. For months on end, my guru went on instructing me without uttering a single word.

"Telepathy is one of the many by-products of the perfect concentration of the mind, of one-pointedness in the process of thinking. We know, in Tibet, that, to the extent that telepathy relies on physical waves, as yet unknown to your modern science, efficient thought-transmission depends on the distance. It is only when we have become such telepathic experts that the phenomenon is wholly psychic that it becomes completely independent of time or space. The day soon comes when the exchange of thought is so powerful that the perception of the individual sender and receiver becomes

vague and finally disappears so that only the stream of thought itself is perceived."

Was it my imagination? I suddenly had the impression that my brain was empty. I could not even remember if the Rimpoche had been talking or whether he had simply sent thoughts racing through my head without having uttered a word.

The fact remained, anyway, that silence was supreme once more. A moaning wind blew over the roof and waved the purple sleeves of the motionless Precious One. I was conscious that he was doing me a very great favour by spending these hours talking to me, and, at the same time, I was mysteriously impressed by the Rimpoche. The enigmatic serenity of his dark features was overpowering. Never before in my life had I met such convincing sincerity and such authority.

CHAPTER XXVI

MEDITATION IN DARKNESS

THE PRECIOUS ONE went on:

"One day came when my guru thought that my training had been a partial failure and that he could do nothing more for me. My achievements in tummo were satisfactory but I was ambitious to master the higher forms of Tibetan Yoga. Seclusion in an ordinary tsam was not sufficient for me and a more ruthless and ascetic type of life had become necessary. Now that I had started on the road to knowledge, it was impossible to stop halfway. Many of our lamas who try hard never reach the heights of psychic knowledge and power which the dangerous 'short path' confers on its followers. Failure to progress on a road which forbids any retreat means that they stumble, fall and sink into an abyss of confusion and doubt, injuring themselves physically and mentally.

"I could not progress on the short path without going through an ordeal which is one of the great institutions of Tibet—the practice of seclusion in complete darkness, either in *tsam khangs* situated in the neighbourhood of large monasteries or in more remote and isolated *ritöds*.

"One morning, I took leave of my guru, who promised to go on looking after me telepathically, and left for Shigatse. From there, I was sent to a small lamasery, which I am not allowed to name, several days to the west of Tashilumpo and where seclusion in darkness is commonly practised. The day after my arrival was scheduled for the beginning of my entombment.

"I looked for the last time at the broad daylight, at the sun-drenched valley of the Tsang Po, at the trees and flowers. Now that I was going to be deprived of it, nature seemed more beautifully entrancing than ever. Tearing myself away from it, I was ushered into a specially-built vault and the door through which I came was sealed. A brick wall was built in front of the sealed entrance so as to make the entombment more complete.

"The complete silence and utter darkness were terrifying. Not a spark of light ever penetrated; the only sound was, once a day, that of my meagre ration of parched barley, roots and water being pushed through a small, dark aperture in the wall. I had to search for hours, in the beginning, to find the aperture and this muffled sound of food being shoved into my cell was the only indication that the outside world still existed.

"I must confess that I was panic-stricken in the early stages of my entombment. I had chosen to remain in complete darkness for the traditional period of three years, three months and three days! At first, I could not stand the idea and yet, here I was, a prisoner of my own free will, I even lost control of myself and thought, for a time, that I was becoming insane. However, with the help of my old guru's telepathic messages, calm seeped back gradually and I settled down to work.

"All conception of day and night, of time and space disappeared in my mind. Absolute darkness brought out vividly my lack of thought control. Visions and mental pictures of all kinds were constantly floating round my cell; a long time and tireless effort were required to dissolve these phantasmagorias and mirages. Slowly, these visions were replaced by a small moving spot which gradually reduced its size to that of a *thigle*, a minute point. I eventually managed to immobilize this point and disintegrate it completely.

"I then started my numerous psychic exercises which I had been unable to do in broad daylight near Sakya. Through constant meditation and concentration, I finally managed to eliminate sleep altogether. Gradually, I became free from the perpetual cycle of effort and relaxation to which ordinary men are submitted. I became one continuous effort towards betterment, towards enlightenment. My ego faded away and, in the process, I eventually acquired what you would term supernormal powers. However, I cannot describe to you what I personally achieved though I can tell you briefly about the usual powers derived from such an ordeal.

"Perhaps the easiest achievement is the creation of ghosts. These *tulpas* are hallucinatory beings created after months of powerful concentration of thought following a secret technique which is imparted by specialized gurus. Tulpas are produced by pouring psychic energy into the creation of autonomous thought-forms. They become a reality, not only to their creator but to all those who move in the psychic atmosphere thus created. In time, they can even escape from the control of their creator and wander about until the mass of psychic energy of which they are made has spent itself. The tulpa then disintegrates. Such a tulpa was created when the late Panchen Lama fled to China. He left behind, in Shigatse, a ghost who was the image of himself and who fooled the agents of the Lhasa government. When, a week later, the tulpa disappeared, the real Panchen Lama was already out of reach and he arrived safely in Chinese territory before the pursuing Tibetan troops had caught up with him.

"Another power derived from meditation in darkness is the animation of material objects by mental processes. The creation of the *phurba* (magic dagger) has played an important part in Tibetan history. In the early stages of the penetration of lamaism into Tibet, the phurba was used against

hostile rulers such as King Langdharma. The psychic fluid having been poured into the dagger after years of powerful concentration of the mind, the weapon was manipulated mentally from a distance and cut Langdharma's throat as if by accident.

"Levitation is very rare but can be achieved by those who have learned its difficult technique. Just like Milarespa, the founder of the Kargyupa sect, they know how to neutralize the pull of gravity. But without achieving complete levitation, a certain technique called *lung-gom* enables its devotees to travel at incredible speed. They hop along for several days and nights without food or rest and cover great distances in one stage. They walk like somnambulists, having reached a trance-like state in which their mind and will power are so concentrated on a distant destination that they have to reach it whatever the physical obstacles on the way. After many years of training in this special form of Yoga and after having achieved complete control over their breathing system, their weight can disappear almost entirely and those who are gifted can achieve partial levitation."

Once more, deep silence was established. Neither of us had moved one inch. While the Precious One talked, I kept my eyes on the mysterious moon, a moon which seemed to be much closer and larger at that altitude than at sea level. The frozen, barren landscape around our lamasery gave me the impression that I had switched positions, that I was on the moon right now, listening to fantastic tales of another planet and looking at a blue earth revolving in interstellar space. The only thing which surprised me was that I was not dreaming—or at least that I was almost certain to be awake.

Not a sound could be heard below. The lamasery was asleep and death seemed to have become supreme all over

the globe. With a faint sigh, the Rimpoche resumed his tale:

"Well, a few months before I was due to come out of my entombment, a small hole was pierced in the wall and a thin ray of light was allowed into my cell, dazzling my untrained eyes. Each day, the hole was enlarged so as to accustom my eyes to bright daylight. One day, at last, the brick wall was demolished and the door was opened. I was free and I was, this time, a real master of the occult.

"I became in my turn a guru and taught disciples. My meditations in darkness, which I renewed several times since, taught me how to acquire many more supernormal powers; for instance, the art of invisibility at will. I learned how to move among other human beings without arousing the slightest feeling or sensation among them. No perception takes place and even the subconscious mind of the spectators did not register my presence among them. I also became proficient at *phowa*: the science of transferring one's consciousness from one body to another and of resuscitating corpses. This is based on Kundalinī Yoga and is practised in its lowest form in India by *sadhus* who resuscitate dead animals.

"However, I never forgot the deep purpose of all my efforts. These psychic achievements were nothing but stepping stones towards ultimate reality, nothing but illusions of the sangsaric world. I never relaxed my efforts, concentrating more intensely than ever on crushing desire of any kind, on compassion for all who live and suffer. Gradually, I left behind the world of phenomenon, not only the world of this earth but the universe of the psyche and of supernormal powers. I started studying the Void, climbing the endless spiralling path which leads beyond mystic visions and transcends object or subject, joy or suffering, finite or infinite, time or eternity, existence or non-existence, to the

Void where all those terms are meaningless, towards the Ineffable Reality. Words are of no use, now; they cannot express the inexpressible. Such transcendental illumination cannot be communicated, it can only be experienced."

The Precious One remained in his trance-like state for a long time, his eyes no longer blazing but turned inwards. Nothing broke the stillness of the vanishing night. I contemplated the pale blue sky of dawn, far beyond the horizon. The entire night had been spent on the temple's roof and, though we were in summer, the night had been freezing. For the first time, I shivered.

The Rimpoche started slightly and looked at me with piercing eyes:

"I have told you enough now. This is more than I have told anyone, except my disciples. If you want to devote your life to the study of Yoga, this conversation will satisfy you for the present. Leave Tibet and go back to your world. If you feel compelled to do so, come back to the Himalayas in a few years and look for a suitable guru. As for me, I shall no longer be alive."

A burning question hovered on the tip of my tongue but, for some unaccountable reason, I hardly dared express it. I had just given it up when the Precious One looked at me sharply and, with a faint touch of sarcasm, answered my silent question:

"A true master of the occult never allows himself to make a public exhibition of his powers. Do not expect me to perform like those numerous fakirs and pseudo-magicians you can see in India or even here in Tibet."

With these parting words, the magnetic Rimpoche rose from his seat and vanished noiselessly down the wooden stairs. Under my feet, I could hear the lamas opening their daybreak service. The pulsating beat of drums, conch shells

and incantations sounded in the awakening dukhang, while the warm odours of melting butter indicated that morning tea was being churned.

Beyond the crystal-blue snows of the Lhajagonak Mountains, the first sun rays were illuminating the dark sky and seemed to disperse the darkness of Tibet's psychic mysteries. After an entire night on this roof, I did not feel tired, simply benumbed. Had I just dreamed all this or had the Rimpoche really been there? The pile of books was still lying on the floor, his silken cushion was still there. I went down the staircase into the courtyard and left the Dragon lamasery, the place on earth where I had heard the weirdest tales.

CHAPTER XXVII

LAST GLIMPSES OF A FORBIDDEN LAND

MY FEELINGS WERE not in tune with the glorious morning of sunshine and fleecy clouds bathing in a dark blue sky when I left Dekyi Lingka for the shores of the Kyi River. This was real departure. I was leaving Lhasa, for ever perhaps, starting on my return journey to India. Would I ever come back to this blissful land?

It did not take long to accomplish the half mile or so which separates Dekyi Lingka from the river and we soon reached the Kyi Chu's stone embankment. For a change, I was going to navigate sixty miles down the Kyi, as far as its junction with the mighty Tsang Po. The heavy muddy waters had been considerably swollen by the recent rains and the current was strong enough to carry us down to Chusul in a day.

Gifts had been pouring into Dekyi Lingka before I left. Dozens of rotten eggs, sheepskins full of rancid butter, meat, bags of flour and rice had piled up sky high in the courtyard and the entire pyramid was divided among the numerous inhabitants of the Indian mission. I took with me all the durable gifts such as Chinese brocades, Tibet works of art, religious dilbus and dorjes, as well as a bottle of Scotch offered by Tsarong Shape and American army rations from George. Also, several farewell letters from cabinet ministers and officials. The kindness and hospitality of all my friends in Lhasa rendered this departure all the more distressing but there was nothing I could do about it. Necessity makes the law. I had to leave.

Tsarong Shape, who controls navigation in Tibet, had requisitioned one of the typical craft in which Tibetan fishermen or traders navigate. This square coracle, made of untanned yak hide stretched on a wooden framework, was floating quietly alongside the stone embankment. My numerous boxes and tins were carefully loaded and adjusted so as to balance their weight. These amazing vessels are unsafe and they have a remarkable ability to capsize on the slightest provocation; they are so light that, when inverted, they can easily be carried by a man; I had seen a great many sturdy boatmen carrying these craft on their shoulders, looking like giant tortoises walking on their hindlegs along the flowing river.

The owner, who was already seated in the boat, was going to shoulder the coracle all the way back to Lhasa, more than sixty miles! He insisted on taking along a troublesome goat who sat smugly on my personal suitcase and whose job it was to carry the belongings of the skipper while he carried the boat back to Lhasa.

I decided to descend into the coracle in order to remove the goat who had started digging her teeth into my valise and fell with all my weight on the hide. A sharp cry from the onlookers and the feeling that I was sinking through the leather floor warned me that I had made a blunder. I quickly gripped the edge and put my feet on the wooden framework, which is what I should have done in the first place. Thank God, the hide was undamaged and no water had filtered through.

Chumpa was on the pier and was taking leave of his tearful father. The old parent was staying on in Lhasa. They would probably never see each other again and both would follow their separate Karmas until they had gone through their cycles of reincarnation. It was strangely stirring in my

rather depressed mood to see this decent old man weep. Chumpa tried to console him philosophically, pointing out that he did not have long to live anyway and that nothing could be more praiseworthy than to die in the Holy City.

I finally took leave of Hugh Richardson, thanking him profusely for his unlimited hospitality and help, of George Tsarong who had become a very close friend and of his father who I hope, for Tibet's sake, would keep his political influence in Lhasa for many years to come.

More careful this time, I let myself fall as lightly as possible on the wooden framework of the craft and, with a loud yell, the skipper shoved off. I turned round and waved at the small group of men fast disappearing in the distance as we were carried away by the swirling current, a terrible nostalgia already in my heart.

Our ship promptly reached the middle of the majestic river, our skipper steering its course with a clumsy rudder. Navigation at twelve thousand feet above sea level! The merciless sun beat on our heads but the gurgle of the water splashing against our yak hide and the rustling of the powerful current thrusting us down the valley was refreshing.

The beastly goat was again in the process of eating my suitcase, and had already torn part of the cover away. I had to threaten to chuck the infernal animal overboard before our captain would consider re-establishing a certain amount of discipline among his zoological crew.

We floated on, the Forbidden City disappearing in the distance. The Cyclopean Potala and the Chakpori Hill quickly diminished in size, came closer together and progressively faded away in the morning mist. The dazzling mass of Drepung lamasery and the glittering roof of Nechung temple streamed past us. I had the feeling that I was no longer

master of my own fate and that some inexorable destiny was tearing me away from this secluded paradise. The entire valley of Lhasa was unwinding itself, its green parks and woods, its elegant villas, its shining temples and sprawling monasteries were all rushing away towards the horizon which I had left only a short while ago. Far away on the right and lost in the bluish shadow of a towering mountain, Gaadong temple sparkled like a precious jewel forgotten in a dark cave.

The large country house of the regent nestled near the bend of the Kyi towards the south and very soon the happy valley of Lhasa, the earthly foretaste of endless nirvana, faded away and disappeared behind the rocky spur round which we floated. The swirling current became threatening for a time and I had to admire the nautical skill of our skipper who managed to see us through the foaming torrent rushing at the bottom of a deep gorge.

Happily, the Kyi soon resumed its normal width and its powerful current recovered its majestic peacefulness. But, alas, no more gardens, villas or glittering temples. The blissful valley of Lhasa was nothing more now than a precious memory. A barren desert of grey rocks settled on both sides of the river, dreary, monotonous, soporific. With the help of the water's reverberation, I slithered slowly and gradually into a heavy slumber, with a background of rustling water and regular splashing. A jumble of pictures and thoughts rolled through my head, mingling everything I had seen, heard or experienced since I had left Gangtok, several months before.

It is very seldom that an old and persistent dream, if and when it comes true, is not disappointed when confronted with reality. However, thinking now about my old dream in Spain

and real Tibet as I had seen it, I felt that the forbidden land of god and demons had surpassed that dream.

It was already amazing to think about the reality of this least known country in the world, aloof and dignified behind its massive ramparts, perpetuating in the middle of the twentieth century a happy medieval life which has disappeared in every other land. What was astounding, however, was to think of the political indifference of the great powers of the West, at a time when air power is supreme, to this fortress standing in the heart of Asia, shielded from danger until now by its titanic Himalaya and Kuen Lun mountains.

Never has the political evolution of the Asiatic continent been more dramatically confusing than after the Second World War. How could the political, strategic and religious importance of the Roof of the World have been so long overlooked?

Perhaps this oversight is fortunate for the inhabitants of Tibet. Wars and revolutions are raging all around, spreading misery and confusion among millions of Asiatics who do not know how to adjust themselves to a strange new world. But in the centre of the largest continent, towering directly over half the world's population, apparently floating on a sea of clouds which surrounds and isolates it constantly, Tibet goes on leading its own life, oblivious of the folly of mankind, bent on its metaphysical speculations and its psychic experiments.

Yet, for all its apparent backwardness, it may be that in an age which is fast becoming a new mystical era Tibet is easier to understand than during the more materialistic pre-war periods, than during the nineteen-hundreds of the Younghusband expedition. Besides being a highly important country strategically, besides upholding politically the spiritual pre-eminence of the Dalai Lama over central Asia and besides

throwing a special light on the contemporary political evolution of the Asiatic continent, Tibet can in truth teach something to the rest of the world. Not only with its deep knowledge of what we Westerners call the occult, but perhaps more humbly in its unalterable joyfulness and its contentment with its earthly conditions, in its persistent efforts towards spiritual betterment, in its prayers for the coming of a new world and the new Buddha. During the New Year festival, the most important announcement of Gotama is endlessly repeated by thousands of lamas as if it were a magic incantation:

"I am not the first Buddha who came upon earth nor shall I be the last. In due time, another Buddha will arise in the world, a Holy One, a Supremely Enlightened One, endowed with wisdom in conduct, auspicious, knowing the universe, an incomparable leader of men, a master of angels and mortals. He will reveal to you the same eternal truths which I have taught you. He will preach his religion, glorious in its origin, glorious at the climax and glorious at the goal, in the spirit and in the letter. He will proclaim a religious life, wholly perfect and pure, such as I now proclaim. He will be known as Maitreya."

Several weeks later, I stood on the Nathu La Pass and, for the last time, looked over the Roof of the World, over this mysterious and forbidden land, awed by the solemn majesty of this ocean of clouded valleys and snowy peaks

For the first time, Chumpa kept silent, understanding that I did not want to be bothered but left to my own thoughts. We were in midsummer now and the snow had disappeared. The air was cold and, under a glowing sun, I felt good. But there remained within me a gnawing nostalgia for a forgotten world, an undefinable homesickness for the serene beauty of Tibet in which I confusedly poured small

details of everyday life and the breathtaking scope of the lamas' metaphysical knowledge.

I tried to tear out all my feelings for this wondrous land, and remember only its spiritual meaning for millions of confused and suffering human beings, this odd emotion which seizes every Westerner when this magic and mysterious word is uttered: TIBET.

EPILOGUE

THERE IS an old saying in Lhasa according to which, "If the heart be stout, a mouse can lift an elephant." No proverb could have become more topical at a time when everyone began to wonder whether the Tibetan mouse would indeed have a stout enough heart to lift and cast away the Chinese elephant whose swift metamorphosis into a Communist colossus in 1949 represented an entirely new kind of threat.

Early in 1948, there were only premonitory signs of such a dramatic metamorphosis. Believing that they could move as leisurely in the twentieth century as they had in the remote past, the Tibetans decided to send an official mission to the Western world. Although trade negotiations and financial agreements were the official purpose of the mission, the Tibetans were also enquiring discreetly about the political prospects of a diplomatic recognition of their country by the Western Powers. My old friend Shakabpa Dzepön and three colleagues left Tibet via India and sailed to Hong Kong.

Having cut their hair, taken off their earrings and exchanged their silk brocades for Western clothes, they arrived in San Francisco during the summer of 1948. They were in possession of four Tibetan passports issued half a century ago, numbered from 1 to 4, the only Tibetan passports in existence!

The Tibetan mission arrived in Washington unannounced and received a cool reception. However, over the strong protests of the Chinese embassy, who could not tolerate

that "Chinese subjects" should be allowed into the United States on presentation of "false" passports, trade negotiations were started with the Tibetans. Being up to date, Shakabpa asked for a dollar loan and trade agreements for the greatest Tibetan export: wool. The negotiations failed, unfortunately, and the mission left for London where they received a heartier if more cautious welcome from their old British friends. Their return to Lhasa empty-handed seemed to prove that those cabinet ministers and high officials were right who favoured closer ties with India rather than complete independence and reliance on the support of Western Powers. India had overcome her internal difficulties and was now an independent Asian Power in her own right. The United States and Great Britain, on the other hand, were not prepared to help an independent Tibet in any conceivable way, and remained blind to its immense political and strategic value.

The mission had hardly returned to Tibet when a gigantic storm broke out in the Far East, a storm which had not been prepared by Western blunders during the post-war period as so many Westerners still imagine, but which had been brewing for a quarter of a century.

The Red hurricane was let loose in the last days of 1948. In November the Chinese Communists seized Mukden and the Nationalists were thrown out of Manchuria. The Marxist bulldozer then ran down on China proper with increasing momentum: Peking fell in January 1949 and the whole of North China including Nanking was overrun during the next five months. Shanghai fell at the end of May, Changsha in August.

The leading Tibetans were panic-stricken and began wondering if the old prediction concerning the thirteen

Dalai Lamas did not apply to some political upheaval of the first magnitude which would destroy the entire theocracy of Tibet. They recalled what looked like a prophetic passage in the Great Thirteenth's political testament:

"It may happen that here, in the centre of Tibet, the religion and secular administration may be attacked both from the outside and from the inside. Unless we can guard our own country, it will now happen that the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, the Father and the Son, the Holders of the Faith, the glorious rebirths, will be broken down and left without a name. As regards the monasteries and the priesthood, their lands and other properties will be destroyed. The officers of the state, ecclesiastical and secular, will find their lands seized and their other property confiscated and they themselves made to serve their enemies or wander about the country as beggars do."

The Nationalist cause in China seemed hopeless and the future policy of Communist China threatening to Tibet. There was no point in keeping up any diplomatic relations with the despised Kuomintang, relations which might even incite the Communists to attack Tibet. Having thought it over carefully, the Lhasa government suddenly made up its mind. On July 9, 1949, the Chinese embassy was asked by the Foreign Affairs Bureau to leave Tibet instantly. Ambassador Hsi-Chang Chen left with his entire delegation after vigorous but vain protests.

This protective gesture did not, of course, put an end to the external threat. Tibet's last foreign bastion was the group of tough Chinese Moslems in north-west China, the Ma clan. They had repeatedly whipped the Communists' First, Second, Third and Sixth Armies in Shensi and Kansu. But the crushing superiority of Communist armaments and endless reinforcements began to tell. Ma Pu-Fang's troops

finally exhausted their supplies and, cut off from the rest of Nationalist China and from all sources of assistance, started to retreat slowly, giving up their large cities one after the other. Lanchow, the gateway to Central Asia and capital of Kansu, fell at the end of August. A few days later Sining, the capital of Tsinghai, was engulfed by the Red flood which reached the geographical border of Tibet, the towering mountains of the Roof of the World. The Moslem bastion of the north-west had crumbled.

Simultaneously, at the beginning of September and for the first time, the Chinese Communists stated their future policy towards Tibet, on the Peking radio and the next day in a threatening editorial of the official New China News Agency: "Tibet as well as Turkestan are integral parts of China." The Chinese Communists were determined to "liberate" Tibet, warning the "British and American imperialists and their stooge, the Indian Nehru government" not to dare help Tibet or run the risk of "cracking their skulls against the mailed fist of the great Chinese People's Liberation Army".

India had not remained idle during these momentous events. In view of the showers of anti-Indian insults thrown out by the Chinese Reds, the prospect of two thousand miles of Himalayan frontier in the hands of the Marxists was definitely unpleasant. Delhi mapped out its political offensive carefully and started by absorbing Sikkim, depriving the old philosophically-minded maharaja of all political power. This move was followed by the signature of a treaty with the Land of the Thunder Dragon in the early days of August, according to which India took over Bhutan's foreign affairs in exchange for an annual cash subsidy. The Himalayan kingdom became, virtually, an Indian pro-

tectorate. The Indian political officer who was handling India's Himalayan policy then left for Lhasa to study how best Tibet's independence could be preserved. But India made it quite plain that she was unwilling to extend military protection to Lhasa although she was prepared to fight vigorously on the diplomatic front—the same useless, ineffective attitude which is always powerless against the quasi-religious fanaticism of the Marxists.

The authorities in Lhasa were watching the deteriorating situation early in 1950 with increasing alarm. The Regent sent anxious messages to New Delhi in February, expressing hopes for closer relations between Tibet and India—a veiled bid for effective Indian support. Slightly embarrassed, India decided to ignore Tibet's outstretched hand. Rebuffed but not yet discouraged, understanding that there was nothing more to be expected from that quarter. Lhasa decided to send a mission to negotiate with the Chinese. Early in May 1950, an eight-man Tibetan mission arrived in Calcutta, led once again by my friend Shakabpa. Its destination was Hong Kong, where they were instructed to make contact with the Chinese Communist authorities. But in June, just as they were boarding a plane for the British colony, they were stopped by the Indian authorities under the spurious excuse that their visas were not in order. India had, in fact, cancelled their visas at the request of the British government, who did not want to risk offending the Chinese Reds. Back in New Delhi, Shakabpa was told that the new Chinese Communist ambassador was about to arrive and that he might just as well wait to meet him in India.

Three months elapsed. Frantically worried by now, the Lhasa government stepped up its purchases of arms and ammunition in India, while thousands of mules and yaks conveyed supplies to the border fortresses—north to Nag-

chuka, east to Chamdo. Sawang Ragashar, the Tibetan war minister, went to the frontier to supervise the military preparations himself. Having decided to give as little provocation to the Chinese as possible, the Indian government recalled Hugh Richardson during the summer and replaced him with an Indian official, Dr. S. Sinha—hoping to put an end to Peking's propaganda, according to which British and American "imperialists" were intriguing in Tibet and thus "justifying" China's planned invasion.

The Tibetans were making a desperate effort. The numerous letters received during this twilight period gave me a clear and sad picture of what was going on in the Holy City, giving the impression of great disillusionment with the West, of demoralization on the part of the wealthy, and often of a determined will to fight, however hopeless the situation. Every Tibetan village had to furnish a quota of soldiers. Officers trained in India attempted to whip up this improvised army as quickly as possible. The neighbourhood of Lhasa became a vast training ground for this new army, and new recruits could be seen drilling day after day along the Kyi Chu river. The Holy City lost all its transportation facilities, mules, horses and yaks being conscripted by the military authorities. A huge propaganda effort was made. Temples were filled as they had never been before, religious services were multiplied, passages from the holy Kangyur were read in public by appointed monks. The Oracles of Nechung and Gaadong went into daily trances under government orders, but their pronouncements were extremely gloomy and gradually destroyed the morale of their devotees. On August 15th, the earthquake which devastated the largely unknown and unexplored wilderness of Eastern Tibet and Assam spread its tremors to Lhasa, and was looked upon as an ominous sign of coming disasters. The National Assembly

gathered in Norbhu Lingka late in the summer of 1950 and remained permanently in session.

Down in India, the Chinese ambassador Yuan Chung-Hsien arrived in New Delhi at last and his preliminary negotiations with Shakabpa started toward the end of September. But this was only a side-show. The real drama was being enacted in Central Asia, beyond the Himalayas.

All along Tibet's Central Asian frontiers, the Chinese Communists were making a tremendous effort. All through the winter of 1949-50 they cleared the approaches to Tibet, destroying the remnants of the Nationalists who stood in their way in Sikang. Late in 1949 they overran Sichang, the only guerilla base and airfield left to the Chinese Nationalists in Western China. Early in 1950 two main expeditionary forces were taking shape. General Peng Teh-Huai's First Field Army was poised in the north and north-east along the Tsinghai border, while one-eyed General Liu Po-Chang's Second Field Army prepared its offensive in Sikang. A third army was building up in the far west, in Turkestan, under the colossal shadow of the Karakoram mountains. Based on the oasis of Khotan, it was poised for an offensive on the Western Tibetan city of Rudok. Its secret preparations went unnoticed by the Lhasa government, and no Tibetan troops had been appointed to defend Western Tibet, leaving that area utterly defenceless. Red agents—Russians and Chinese —explored the unknown terrain of the Kuen Lun mountains, searching for accessible passes leading directly from Turkestan to Western Tibet in order to avoid the stratospheric defiles and gorges of the Karakoram, and avoid the neutral ground of Ladak. Lhasa never thought for a moment that this unexplored, allegedly inaccessible frontier could ever be violated by armed invaders.

The Tibetan government kept its eyes on the north and

the east. Liu Po-Chang's expedition was organized in Szechwan's capital city of Chengtu, and his subordinates found the going extremely rough further west in Sikang. The capture of Sichang had opened the way but they were unable to reach Yaan before the spring. They marched on from there to Tachienlu, a hundred miles to the west, with less difficulty, and paused for the whole summer. Nationalist resistance had disappeared and the former warlord Liu Wen-Hui had apparently been won over to Marxism. But food was scarce and they had to use clumsy air-drops to supply their troops in Tachienlu. The old derelict motor-road running from Yaan to Tachienlu was repaired and new steel bridges were built. Soon motor vehicles and trucks were leaving Chengtu daily, bringing up men and supplies to Tachienlu. On the very edge of the towering Tibetan highlands, the Yinkuanchai airfield was reconditioned, but it was only a small wartime emergency airfield. Brick tea was gathered for purposes of propaganda distribution to the Tibetan population. Under the expert advice of the cultural anthropologist Li An-Che, the Communists emphasized their conciliatory attitude toward the Lamaist religion and local Tibetan customs.

The second Red expedition was based in Sining, the capital of Tsinghai. General Peng Teh-Huai supervised the difficult construction of a fantastic road running all the way from Sining to Jeykundo, working at altitudes exceeding 17,000 feet, and gradually moving his army to the very edge of the Roof of the World.

Political propaganda went hand in hand with the military preparations. A full generation ago, promising Tibetan youths had already been selected and trained by the far-seeing Reds. The most promising was the young Sang Chi Yueh-Hsi, who became better known under his Chinese name

Tien Pao. He had impulsively joined the Red Army troops of Mao Tse-Tung when they passed through Eastern Tibet on their 1935 "Long March". Sent to the "Minorities School" in the Communist capital at Yenan, he graduated two years later and joined the Party in 1937. He was put in charge of a provisional Tibetan administration in Sikang.

Another Red-sponsored movement was built up in Kansu and Tsinghai. Capitalizing on the presence of the young Panchen Lama at the nearby Kum-Bum monastery, another Tibetan Communist, Che Jigme, became president of the "Tibetan Provisional Government" and professed to uphold the pseudo-political claims of the Dalai Lama's rival. Meanwhile a series of radio broadcasts started in May, emanating from Sining, promising internal autonomy to Tibet, urging that allegiance be given peacefully to Peking in order to avoid "unnecessary losses". The speaker was a Tibetan Communist of long standing, Hsi Jao-Chiatso, vice-chairman of the Tsinghai Provincial People's Government. Citing the spectacular and legendary Long March of the Reds twenty years earlier, he stated quite candidly that the Tibetans could not resist the Chinese. He also advised them not to count on Britain or the United States, and reminded them of the fate of the Chinese Nationalists to whom such help had been extended.

The bulk of Tibet's future Marxist leaders, meanwhile, was made up of a number of youngsters who had been enticed into the Party at one time or another. They were being trained as political workers and more than half of the thousand "cadres" trained at the North-West Revolutionary University in Sian were Tibetans, most of whom were sent afterwards to join the Tibetan "People's Liberation Army" in Tsinghai.

Thus Tibet was almost entirely surrounded by an enemy who attacked on all fronts simultaneously, who brought forth not merely a military menace but a social, political and quasi-religious message, and yet who managed to convey with Jesuitic skill the impression that it looked upon Lamaism and old traditions with benevolence. Peking's policy was a shrewd mixture of threats and cajoleries, following a remarkable pattern established long ago. While the Communists in China used the talents of such former anti-Communist Nationalists as General Fu Tso-Yi and General Tung Chi-Wu in Inner Mongolia and General Chang Chi-Chung in Kansu, they were prepared in Tibet to use feudal landlords and Living Buddhas so long as it suited their purpose. Their propaganda used sweet words and awful threats alternately, according to circumstances. While in January 1950 Lhasa was "ordered" by the Peking radio broadcasts to send representatives to China in order to negotiate a peaceful solution of pending problems, they began to soften their message toward the spring when they had realised the immense difficulties facing their planned invasion. The sight of Tibet's awe-inspiring mountains and immense freezing highlands took away a great deal of the Communists' arrogance but did not destroy their fanatical will.

One of the most interesting side-lights of the conflict was the obvious desire of the Russians for this Communist occupation of Tibet. The Soviet press and radio took an unusual interest in the coming invasion of the Roof of the World, commenting on it at great length and giving the impression that Moscow wanted to divert China's expansion from Turkestan and Mongolia where their mutual interests were presumably clashing. Leading articles in *Pravda* pointed out Tibet's valuable strategic position and the threat which

an independent Tibet would present for China.

Shakabpa was negotiating with the Chinese ambassador in New Delhi on October 7 when Peking launched its well-planned invasion of Tibet. No announcements were made, and the first news that the invasion had started were discounted on all sides. As late as October 25, Shakabpa denied the invasion rumours and stated blandly: "Our very departure for Peking is tantamount to a denial of invasion reports." The Chinese embassy confirmed this denial, more than two weeks after the invasion had actually started. The following day, however, the rumours becoming more persistent and circumstantial, Peking acknowledged at last that the invasion had started, and the official Russian newspaper in Berlin confirmed it shortly after.

India had been left totally ignorant of this military aggression and had been led to believe, by the Chinese themselves, that a peaceful solution would be worked out through negotiations. When official confirmation of the invasion finally reached New Delhi from the Indian ambassador to Peking, K. M. Panikkar, India reacted with furious violence. The Indian press and public opinion attacked this Communist aggression with a virulence hitherto reserved for Pakistan. Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister, echoed this unanimous feeling in a speech at Ahmedabad and stated that "there is no more peace-loving country than Tibet in the whole world" and that its invasion was an outrage. Premier Nehru echoed this general sentiment in a first formal protest dispatched to Peking on October 27.

Surmounting his indignation, however, Nehru made it quite clear that India would not interfere militarily—and the Chinese consequently felt quite at ease in rebuffing his

protest on October 31. Smarting under a deepening feeling of deliberate insult, India sent a sharp reply the next day to Peking, expressing "surprise and regret" at the military invasion, conveying her "keen disappointment" at the Chinese attitude. Nehru insisted that Peking had "no justification whatever" for invading Tibet, and pointed out that the whole matter was doing considerable damage to Sino-Indian relations at a time when India was sponsoring Red China's admission to the United Nations. The Chinese Communists reacted with scorn and contempt, claimed that it was all an "internal matter" which was of no concern to India, that furthermore American and British "imperialists" had made the invasion unavoidable by preventing the Tibetan delegation from going to Peking. As usual, Moscow took a great interest in the Tibetan question and backed Peking to the hilt. Moscow's *Literary Gazette* declared that Peking had displayed exceptional patience in searching for a peaceful solution, and claimed that full control of Tibet was necessary to ensure the security of China's Western frontiers —displaying far more perspicacity than any Western statesman of the time.

While the diplomatic wrangles and propaganda campaigns were going on in the outside world, a huge, three-pronged, armed expedition was slowly climbing up to the Roof of the World. The autumn weather favoured the invasion, although it increased the physical hardships. Rivers are much lower than in summer because the glaciers are no longer melting. They are easier to ford and snowfall is still relatively slight. The Red soldiers were well equipped with winter uniforms, dehydrated food, thermos bottles, tents and raincoats. Starting out from Tachienlu on October 7, they forded successively the Yalung, Yangtze, Mekong and Salween rivers with tremendous difficulty, winding their way up to

the wild highlands of Kham. The rarefied atmosphere was breath-taking, the cold was bitter, the soaring mountain passes and deep snows proved physically exhausting. The deep gorges often hid sturdy Khamba warriors who conducted guerilla warfare. The swift-running torrents drenched the invaders in ice-cold water, and the wind tore at their faces. The swamps were treacherous. On the bleak plateaux the wild Goloks attacked their rear in the hope of profitable loot. This expedition was no picnic, but the Reds pursued their route doggedly although thousands of men died on the way. Even their fanatical will, however, would have been beaten in the end if there had been the slightest military opposition of a serious kind on the part of a well-armed Tibetan defence—an impossibility in view of the West's complete lack of interest in Tibet's fate and the appalling military weakness of the Lhasa government.

The Tibetans had made the fatal error of concentrating the bulk of their best troops in Chamdo, locked up in the towering fortress. There were hardly any troops beyond or around, no defence in depth, no organized guerilla warfare other than that of the savage Goloks who owed no allegiance to anyone and who were as likely to attack Tibetans as Chinese. Liu Po-Chang's troops did not attack Chamdo right away, and instead inclined their march toward the north and the south in a flanking movement. Lhodzong fell on October 22, Shobando and Pembargo shortly after. The invading force was preceded by political workers and propagandists who attempted to undermine the resistance of Tibetan populations. Isolated and dispirited, armed with antiquated rifles and untrained in modern warfare, the Tibetan armies disintegrated. Surrounded on all sides at last, cut off from communications with the outside world, the

fortress-town of Chamdo fell to the Chinese and its four thousand first-line Tibetan soldiers surrendered along with their commanding officer, General Ngabou.

The situation was no better in the north. Coming in from Jeykundo across the wind-swept highlands of Tsinghai, another Red Army, made up partly of Communist Tibetans, travelled slowly for weeks and eventually stormed the precarious defences of Nagchuka. Further south, however, a small Tibetan contingent held them up at Lhariguo. Winter was coming on, with its freezing temperatures, its unbearable blizzards and blinding snow-storms. It soon became obvious that although Tibetan armies were everywhere defeated, the Communists could no longer progress on account of the impossible terrain and the dreadful hardships entailed. They became bogged down, caught by the terrifying Tibetan winter as Hitler's Wehrmacht had been caught by the Russian. Without real armed opposition on the Tibetan side, the Red offensive came temporarily to a halt.

Lhasa, meanwhile, was swept by panic. The State Oracle having stated that the Dalai Lama should be proclaimed supreme ruler at once in spite of the fact that he had not reached his legal majority, the Regent resigned and the young God-King assumed full powers in a grandiose ceremony on November 17. At the same time, Tibet made an official appeal to the United Nations, her last hope, pleading for the use of its good offices to promote a "peaceful settlement". As usual, the United Nations were reluctant to stick their nose into an insoluble problem at a time when they were already deeply committed in Korea. The United Nations were about to ignore Tibet's plea altogether when, to their surprise and embarrassment, another small and weak country at the other end of the world, El Salvador, sponsored Lhasa's appeal and applied for immediate debate by the

General Assembly. Frantic consultations having produced no tangible results, El Salvador renewed its official request for full debate on November 18 and pressed the matter. But it was futile to expect an impersonal organization of this kind to take steps when no great Power was willing to sponsor Tibet.

But even this timid reaction of world public opinion, combined with the unexpected difficulties encountered by the invading forces, prompted a slightly alarmed Chinese government to attempt a reconciliation with the vexed Indians. On their side, temporarily encouraged, the Tibetans decided to send a three-man delegation to the United Nations under the leadership of Dzasa Surkhang—but it never went beyond India.

New developments were taking place which were gradually altering the whole picture and destroying the Tibetan will to resist. Temporarily paralysed on the military front, the shrewd Communists were making great progress with their propaganda. On November 24 Sikang, now fully occupied, was proclaimed an "Autonomous People's Government" and separated from Tibet as well as from China proper. Its government was cleverly composed, in accordance with the temporising tactics of Mao Tse-Tung's "New Democracy" formula, of seven Lamaist abbots and Living Buddhas, nine local chieftains, and various members of the gentry. Of course the chairman and real master of the situation was the Tibetan Communist Tien Pao. But the evidently conciliatory attitude of the Reds gave food for thought to many wealthy Tibetans who began thinking that they could reach a *modus vivendi* with them. Furthermore, the Reds had released thousands of Tibetan prisoners, given them six dollars each as well as food and clothing, and sent them back to their Tibetan homeland. Those who did go back were

full of praise for the Communists' generosity and kind treatment. Many more chose to remain and enlist right away in the invading Red Army. Commanding General Ngabou, overcome by the leniency of the Chinese and partly converted to their viewpoint, sent of his own free will a message to Lhasa claiming that resistance was no longer possible and strongly advising negotiations. Red propaganda was making tremendous headway in Eastern and Central Tibet.

Meanwhile, news that Western Tibet had been invaded in its turn broke out in Lhasa like a bombshell. Such a thing had not been thought possible. Rudok had already fallen to a handful of Chinese, and a two-pronged armed expedition was marching on Gartok and Shigatse. This last blow impelled the Lhasa government to take drastic steps, and on December 21, in the middle of the night, the Dalai Lama fled from the Holy City. Early in January he entered the Chumbi Valley after a speedy journey. His flight was protected by my old friend Tsarong, who thus ended his brilliant career the way he had started it forty years earlier by protecting the similar flight of the thirteenth Dalai Lama.

The Tibetan ruler settled down in Yatung, only a short distance from India and the safety of exile. But such an exile would have considerably damaged the position of the invading Chinese, and they redoubled their efforts at wooing the Tibetan leaders. The capture of the Dalai Lama was essential for the success of their plans. Their task was made easy by the obvious indifference of the rest of the world and by India's firm determination not to interfere. They sent a number of propagandists to Lhasa, fanned the pacifist movement in the Holy City, and strenuously undermined the Tibetan will to resist. Late in January the abbots of Sera, Ganden and Drepung came to call on the Dalai Lama at Yatung and urged him to return to Lhasa. The utter hope-

lessness of further resistance was becoming obvious.

Forsaken by the rest of the world, Tibet decided to open negotiations with Peking once more. General Ngabou left for the Chinese capital in February 1951 after having already initiated peace talks in Chamdo, and all Tibetan officials who were still in India were recalled to Tibet—including the unfortunate Shakabpa who was under disfavour for having failed in his mission. While Ngabou was proceeding to Peking, Dzasa Surkhang dropped his plan to appeal to the United Nations and started negotiations with the Chinese ambassador in New Delhi. He eventually rode back to Yatung in March 1951, bearer of a conciliatory message for the Dalai Lama: the Chinese regretted the "misunderstanding" between the two countries, and full assurances were given that Tibet's internal autonomy would be respected. The Dalai Lama thereupon decided to send a second mission to Peking via India under the leadership of his new commander-in-chief of the army, Kunsang Tse.

The ceremonial signing of the seventeen-point pact between Tibet and China took place in Peking on May 23. The new treaty provided that the Panchen Lama would be allowed to return to Shigatse and that Tibet's armed forces would be merged with Red China's. Thus came to an end the great Central Asian war and thus also came to an end, not merely Tibet's modern independence but her very existence as a separate civilization. It was the end of an epoch in world history, the snuffing-out of the last independent civilization left on our shrinking planet.

A new era started for Tibet. As soon as the pact had been signed in Peking, the Tibetan mission flew back to India, accompanied by a five-man Communist mission appointed to take over the actual government of the Roof of the World.

I saw them on their way through Singapore on July 1, 1951. The contrast between Kunsan Tse and his stalwart Tibetans, wrapped in their brilliant silk brocades, and the shabby uniforms and nondescript caps of the Chinese Reds was startling. The Chinese stood modestly behind the smiling Tibetans, but there could be no doubt as to who were the real masters.

A month later I found myself in India's Uttar Pradesh province, very close to the Tibetan border. The Chinese occupation, paralysed during the fierce winter, was now proceeding relentlessly again, but at a leisurely pace. Gartok had fallen, and Western Tibet's senior officials had either fled or had been arrested. The others had reluctantly submitted. Two hundred Chinese soldiers were stationed at Taklakot and five hundred at Gartok, well-armed with automatic weapons. Since there was no Tibetan army in Western Tibet, this small force was quite sufficient to subdue an area as large as France. The Communists built roads as they moved along the invasion trail, and the route connecting Khotan in Turkestan was already winding its way up the hitherto unexplored ranges of the Kuen Lun mountains as far as Rudok. It was now in the process of being prolonged to Gartok and from there all the way to Shigatse, along the Tsang Po valley.

All the local Indian traders and officials to whom one could talk described the Chinese as courteous and friendly but disquietingly inquisitive about the imprecise Indo-Tibetan boundaries. The appearance of the first Chinese troops at the Shipki Pass on the Uttar Pradesh frontier alarmed the provincial government, and its fears were communicated to the federal government in New Delhi. Check-posts were opened on the border and fire-arms were distributed by the Indian authorities in frontier areas, especially

in Almora and Garhwal where Chinese-Tibetan infiltration was particularly easy.

Sliding along the frontier, the Communist forces then occupied the area of Mount Kailas and Lake Manasarowar and took over all the passes leading down into Nepal. Everywhere, instead of burdening themselves with large supply convoys, they levied their necessities on the local inhabitants as they advanced. But they always paid meticulously, and their scrupulous honesty built up a tremendous amount of good feeling among the Tibetan population.

New Delhi was also anxious about its other frontiers, that of Assam especially. Early in the spring of 1951, Red troops had appeared at Rima on the far eastern border and had proceeded to take over the entire frontier up to Isona Dzong on the Bhutan border-line. Avoiding the almost impassable mountains further west along the Bhutanese frontier, the Red expeditionary force inclined its march north-westward and went up to our old stop-over on the way to Lhasa, Ralung. Not one minute could the Indians forget that the Chinese—Nationalists as well as Communists—had always claimed a large slice of Assam, the feudal allegiance of Bhutan and Nepal, and in general all the Tibetan areas in the Himalayas. Only blindness could make the Indians believe that their claims would not be pressed sooner or later.

While the occupation of Tibet proceeded relentlessly, the downcast Dalai Lama went back to Gyangtse and there performed the Kawang ceremony. He then proceeded slowly to Lhasa and re-entered the Holy City on August 17 amid great rejoicing, having been preceded by the Chinese Resident, General Chang Ching-Wu. Sawang Ngabou had arrived shortly before from Peking with a copy of the Sino-Tibetan treaty, and placed it in front of the cowed Tibetan Assembly for ratification. The Red trap closed slowly behind

them, isolating Tibet once more from the outside world. Chinese troops gradually occupied Gyangtse, Phari and finally Yatung. And on September 9 the Communist troops entered Lhasa, carrying huge banners and portraits of Mao Tse-Tung, welcomed by a well-rehearsed claque. With great reluctance and after a five-month delay, the Dalai Lama finally ratified the Sino-Tibetan Treaty in October.

The Panchen Lama was officially recognised by the Tibetan authorities at the behest of the Chinese. Che Jigme, the former president of the "Tibetan Provisional Government" created in Tsinghai, arrived in Lhasa, received his instructions from his Chinese overlords, and proceeded to Shigatse in December to prepare for the Panchen Lama's return.

Reforms started immediately. Tackling the most urgent problem, the Chinese demanded that the reluctant monks of Ganden, Sera and Drepung disclose their secret caches of rifles and bullets, and gradually disarmed them. In October women were given equal status with men, as a preliminary to the vast social transformation the Chinese were planning. A drastic redistribution of wealth was then carried out: all surplus property of Tibetan nobles and high-ranking officials beyond a fixed maximum was confiscated and partly distributed. Land, gold, and jewels were taken over by the government.

But social reforms were nothing compared with the profound technological revolution which the Reds initiated, and thanks to which Tibet will never be the same again. The Industrial Age was finally catching up with Tibet. A telephone network was installed in Lhasa, electricity came to all the main buildings, and a primitive but serviceable hospital was set up. A Marxist "university" was opened towards the end of 1951 to start a massive indoctrination of young Tibetans and give them the message of a new prophet. A

state bank was created in Lhasa and the new currency stabilised with the help of a fund of 500,000 rupees brought over by General Chang Ching-Wu.

The Communists did not concentrate wholly on Lhasa. They had also decided to develop Chamdo into the real political and administrative capital of Tibet, since it was easier to control because of its proximity to China than distant Lhasa. That is where they set up a printing plant and it was from there that they began flooding Tibet with printed Communist propaganda and Marxist literature, along with a regular newspaper.

The Industrial Revolution eventually climbed up to the Roof of the World in 1952. A factory was set up in Lhasa to process the native wool, and Russian engineers and mining experts began a systematic exploration of Tibet's vast mineral resources, looking mainly for gold, copper, coal and uranium. The first coal-mine located near Shigatse started operations early in 1953. A year later, the main portion of the Chinese road-building programme was nearing completion. One road went from Khotan to Rudok, Gartok, and from there to Shigatse and Lhasa. A second road ran from the Holy City to Lhariguo, Chamdo and Tachienlu, while a third ran north-eastward to Nagchuka, Jeykundo and Sining. Heavy transport could not yet use all of this elongated network, a great deal of it being too rough, but jeeps could negotiate every inch of it. Airfields were built and already in service at Lhasa, Shigatse and Jeykundo. Smaller landing strips were built at many other points behind the Himalayas. A tremendous radio station was set up in Phari and a huge military base was being built between Lakes Rakas and Manasarowar. Serious reports had already come out in the autumn of 1950 about the presence of Russian-Mongolian elements in the area of Mount Kailas. Their publication in

the *New York Times* on November 22, 23 and 24 had created a sensation in India and embarrassed the Indian authorities. The impregnability of such a military base was obvious and the prospect of being able to dominate the whole of India and Pakistan from such stratospheric heights was too tempting to be overlooked by the Chinese. India now had this sword of Damocles hanging over her.

In February 1952 the incorporation of Tibet's armed forces into China's Red Army was complete. Sawang Ngabou and Sawang Ragashar, the defence minister, received the honorary rank of general in the new Communist army and were thus rewarded for their pro-Chinese behaviour. But no Tibetan of consequence or standing had real power any more.

The deep-seated hostility between Tibetans and Chinese could not be assuaged for long, and an undercurrent of dissatisfaction remained which could only be tamed by violent means. The Chinese authorities decided to move an additional thousand soldiers to Lhasa in 1952, and brought their full armed strength in Central Tibet up to two full divisions, preparing for the unavoidable Tibetan awakening, now that the stupor of the invasion and the admiration for the new technical gadgets had worn off. They did not have long to wait.

In April 1952 grave revolts sprouted in Central Tibet and serious riots shook Lhasa. Ngabou's official residence was surrounded by a furious mob demanding that he use his influence with the Chinese to have them send back most of their armed forces of occupation. Famine began to stalk the land, Tibet being too poor to support the influx of thousands of Chinese and production having been disorganized by land reform. China even asked India's permission to ship food

supplies through Indian territory, being unable to do so in sufficient quantity from Western China. The Reds offered as bait some food supplies for the famine-stricken Indians.

Chinese authority had to be re-established with speed and efficiency if it was to survive at all. Troops were called back from Gyangtse and other provincial centres. They fired into the crowds, decimating the Tibetan mobs. The Red police arrested many leading Tibetans. Anti-Chinese demonstrations continued, nevertheless, Tibetans being a hardy, almost indomitable race. Walls in Lhasa were plastered with posters demanding that the Chinese be forcibly ejected from Tibet. The alarmed Chinese tightened their security measures and resorted to terror in order to crush this Tibetan rebellion once and for all.

The result was that, under Chinese pressure, the Dalai Lama had to dismiss from office his Premier, Sawang Lukhang, accused of having asked the Chinese to quit Tibet and of having inspired the recent revolt. The Tibetan government was then entirely reorganized. The former Kashag was superseded by a new committee in which the Panchen and Dalai Lamas had equal representation and in which both were firmly under the control of Chinese and Tibetan Communists. The wretched Dalai Lama was slowly degraded to the status of a puppet, although the Reds were careful to keep him shrouded in the traditional pomp and circumstance of his previous reincarnations.

After four months of tiresome negotiations, India and China signed a pact on Tibet, vowing non-aggression. Overcoming his former resentment at the high-handedness of the Chinese, Nehru signed on the dotted line on April 29, 1954. India recognised that Tibet constitutes an integral part of China, agreed to withdraw the Indian garrisons

along the Yatung-Gyangtse trade route, and gave as a free gift to China her telephone and telegraph facilities along that route, as "a friendly gesture". During the summer of 1954, the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama went to Peking in great state to represent Tibet at the "Chinese National People's Assembly" and were both quoted as praising the Communist Chinese accomplishments in their homeland. In fact, the Dalai Lama had accepted to go to China in the hope of saving his people "from the worst consequences of Chinese domination". It is likely, at any rate, that he was instrumental in temporarily warding off direct rule from Peking and in suggesting to Mao Tse-Tung the setting up of a "Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region", consisting of fifty-one members, all of whom except five were to be Tibetans.

On his way home to Lhasa the Dalai Lama spent some time in eastern Tibet, in the Chamdo area which was the first to be invaded in 1950, an area that had never been returned administratively to Lhasa. Here he saw with his own eyes the degree of Chinese oppression which finally drove the war-like Khambas to full-fledged revolt. Eventually, heavy-hearted after what he had seen and heard in China and eastern Tibet, but still hopeful, the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa.

The inauguration of the "Preparatory Committee" under the watchful eye of Chinese Marshal Chen Yi, took place in April 1956. The hopes of the Dalai Lama were soon dashed to the ground. Most of the Tibetan members were, in fact, Chinese puppets recruited in Chamdo and western Tibet. All major policy decisions were made by the Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet, in which there were no Tibetans at all. It was all window-dressing, and the Lhasa population soon understood what was happening—triggering

a new wave of anti-Chinese feeling and, for the first time, the awakening of a form of Tibetan political consciousness. New popular leaders, spontaneously chosen by the Lhasan crowds, began to take over authority from the discredited Tibetan officials, to the great irritation of the Chinese. Meantime, in the first half of 1956, most of the Tibetan leaders in the Chamdo area (under direct Chinese military rule) fled to the mountains and became regular guerillas. Those Khamba fighters were to remain a thorn in the flesh of the Chinese invaders for many years to come.

Just about when the Dalai Lama began to feel that his position as a secular *cum* religious leader was becoming untenable, and that he should withdraw from all political activity, he received an invitation to visit India from the Mahabodhi Society. Since, in his own words, "Tibet was still a child of Indian civilization", and there was to be a great celebration for the Buddha Jayanti—the two thousand five-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Lord Buddha—he accepted with great eagerness. After some initial hesitation, the Chinese agreed and the Dalai Lama left for the Chumbi Valley; the strategic road had just been completed under Chinese supervision and it took him only two days to reach Yatung. He could not help laughing when he saw the Chinese officials driving their cars wearing oxygen masks.

The Dalai Lama was received officially by the Indian government and had a number of meetings with Prime Minister Nehru. He was so overcome by the atmosphere of complete freedom and sympathy in India that he almost decided not to go back to Lhasa; but Nehru gently insisted that it would be best if he did, and promised to speak about the Tibetan situation to Chou En-Lai who happened to be in India at the time. With great foreboding in his heart, the Dalai Lama took his advice and went back to Tibet via the

Nathu-La Pass. He was immediately struck by the violent anti-Chinese feelings of the Tibetans, which had grown by leaps and bounds since he had left for India. Tens of thousands of Khambas and Amdo people had been streaming into central Tibet from the eastern provinces and thousands were camped around Lhasa, raising to a pitch the anti-Chinese sentiments of the Lhasan crowds with their tales of Chinese atrocities in eastern Tibet, where Chinese artillery and planes were destroying myriads of villages and monasteries, killing and torturing thousands of Tibetans, laymen as well as lamas.

In gratitude for the reception he had been accorded in India, the Dalai Lama decided to invite Jawaharlal Nehru to visit Lhasa; the Prime Minister of India accepted with pleasure, only to be told by the Chinese authorities, shortly before the visit was scheduled to take place, that it had to be cancelled because they could not "guarantee his safety" in Tibet. As far as the Dalai Lama was concerned, that was the last straw.

I was travelling in India in February 1959 when I had the pleasure of being invited to lunch by the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, on the 28th of that month. When I was ushered into the living-room, the first person to greet me was Lady Mountbatten. We had last met twelve years before, when I had just returned from Tibet; quite naturally, at the time, our conversation was almost exclusively devoted to the Tibet I had just visited—so that when the Prime Minister joined us for that private lunch, the conversation was again devoted largely to Tibet. I can still see and remember Jawaharlal Nehru talking bitterly about the cancellation of his visit to Lhasa and about his anger when Chou En-Lai imparted to him that the Chinese authorities could not

"guarantee his safety" in Tibet; Nehru then added that it was not his safety that would have been in jeopardy but Chou En-Lai's own security. The depth of the rift between India and China at the time was a revelation for me.

Meantime, back in Lhasa, the Dalai Lama was attending the Monlam Festival on March 1, when he was interrupted by two Chinese officers, conveying a message from the Chinese General Tan Kuan-Sen inviting him to a theatrical performance in the Chinese army base, and asking him to fix a convenient date. A few days later, the Chinese specified that the Dalai Lama was to come without any armed escort and that the visit was to be kept secret. The Tibetans were highly suspicious of the Chinese motivations; the secret could not be kept and rumours spread around Lhasa like wildfire on March 9, to the effect that the Chinese intended to kidnap the Dalai Lama. It was already well known that in the eastern provinces, high lamas invited to parties by the Chinese military authorities had never been seen again and were put to death. The following day, the tenth, the Jewel Park where the Dalai Lama was in residence was soon surrounded by an enormous crowd, determined to prevent the Dalai Lama from going to the Chinese base, shouting anti-Chinese slogans such as, "The Chinese must go, leave Tibet to the Tibetans." At times the crowds got out of hand and stoned to death all Tibetans who were known to be pro-Chinese collaborators. The Dalai Lama cancelled his visit but the crowd did not disperse and its leaders requested an assurance that the Dalai Lama would never, under any circumstances, accept an invitation to the Chinese military camp; he gave them that assurance. Enraged, the Chinese generals declared that the time had come "to destroy all these reactionaries" and to put down the rebellion.

All the while, the Dalai Lama's main concern was to

avoid violence and the potentially tragic consequences of the Tibetans' anger in view of the overwhelming military superiority of the Chinese. He soon came to the conclusion that the Chinese intended to attack the Jewel Park and destroy the Tibetan multitudes milling around it. On March 16, it became obvious that Chinese artillery was massing around the Norbhu Lingka, while fresh troops were flown in from China. The Dalai Lama and his advisers then agreed that he should secretly leave Lhasa. He and his party fled during the night of March 17, crossed the Kyi Chu river in coracles and the Tsang Po on the regular ferry. Enjoying the assistance and hospitality of all the Tibetans they met on the way, they made straight for the south-east, prepared to cross into India east of the kingdom of Bhutan. Meantime, back in Lhasa, unaware of the Dalai Lama's flight, the Chinese began shelling the Norbhu Lingka at 2 a.m. on the morning of March 20, killing thousands of Tibetans and leaving it a smouldering ruin filled with corpses; they then shelled the rest of the city of Lhasa, utterly destroyed the Chakpori College of Medicine and devastated the Sera monastery.

While all this was happening, making headlines in the Indian press day after day—"large-scale fighting in Lhasa, Dalai Lama reported under house arrest, China abolishes Dalai Lama government," etc . . . —I was travelling in southern India but decided to return to New Delhi as soon as possible and ask for an interview with the Prime Minister —which took place at 11.30 a.m. on March 29, in his office in the Secretariat. As I was waved by him to a chair on the other side of his desk, I thought it quite natural to pick up the conversation where we had left it a month before and said, "Mr. Prime Minister, you must be feeling quite sorry

about the tragic events in Lhasa." Jawaharlal Nehru looked at me with greater sorrow in his eyes than I had ever seen in any man's eyes hitherto, did not utter a word, pushed his chair back, got up and walked to the window, his back turned to me. An embarrassing silence followed, which I finally had to break with some innocuous comment on the weather. We never once referred to the dramatic events then taking place in Tibet; but, along with the shattering of his belief in the innate human goodness of Asians and, perhaps, regrets at having advised the Dalai Lama to return to Lhasa a couple of years before, Jawaharlal Nehru must certainly have foreseen that some day the Chinese would make trouble over the Indo-Chinese (that is, Indo-Tibetan) border.

Early in April, Tibet's God-King finally arrived in India, after one of the most spectacular escapes of the century. Protected by Khamba warriors and guerilla fighters, travelling mostly at night to avoid detection, moving across wild and wooded territory while an unseasonable and thick layer of clouds covered the area, the Dalai Lama finally reached the Indian border town of Tawang in Assam and boarded a special train commandeered by the Indian government, headed for Mussoorie.

From then on, Tibet's history becomes conterminous with China's. In the early 1960s, Tibet disappeared as a separate entity, to be swallowed up by China's Marxist empire. When war broke out in 1962 between China and India over the precise delimitation of their common borders, Tibet and the Tibetans had no part in it, although the quarrel actually concerned the Tibetan borders with India. The rout of the Indian army and India's overall defeat sealed Tibet's fate, since it eliminated that one power factor—the Indian army—that might have liberated it from the Chinese yoke.

Fate, subsequently, was not kind to the Tibetans. A last ordeal was in store for them, even though it was a purely Chinese domestic affair which spilled over occupied Tibet: the Great Cultural Revolution. For about a decade, from 1966 to 1976, the Chinese occupiers fought one another as well as the Tibetans themselves on the Roof of the World, without, however, in any way, jeopardizing Chinese military control over it; but the damage wrought upon Tibet's monuments, temples and monasteries and their priceless contents turned out to be greater than anything inflicted upon them in the earlier stages of Chinese occupation.

The death of Mao Tse-Tung, the arrest of the Gang of Four, and the counter-revolution of Deng Xiaoping put an end to this wholesale destruction and persecution. Chinese immigration into Tibet was resumed and the prospects are that, while it is unlikely that the Chinese will farm and contribute to agricultural production at such altitudes, they will benefit from the increasing urbanisation that is taking place and, in time, will come to outnumber the Tibetans in their own country—as they have massively outnumbered Mongols and Manchus in Inner Mongolia and Manchuria, and Tibetans in eastern Tibet. Even names have changed in transliteration. Lhasa has become La-sa and inner Tibet has been granted the poetic name of the Xizang Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.

At the time of writing, in 1986, a certain amount of rebuilding and reconstruction is going on—not for the benefit of the Tibetans, their monks or their culture, but for an even greater and more insidious menace than Chinese persecution ever was: tourism. The incorporation of Tibet in the tourist industry of the 1980s and beyond sounds the death-knell of Tibetan civilization more definitely than decades of Chinese oppression. In conformity with the increasing trivialization

of the age, the Tibetan shells, forms, and shapes will remain or be rebuilt, but the inner spirit that raised them in the first place will slowly withdraw and vanish. The exiled Fourteenth Dalai Lama has no illusions, knows that he is the last of the long line of God-Kings, and claims that just as peculiar historical conditions gave rise to it, altered historical conditions now make the whole concept irrelevant. He remains content to preside over and take care of the large Tibetan diaspora spread over four continents. Tibet itself is destined to follow in the footpaths of the Egypt of the Pharaohs in becoming an open-air museum displaying the artifacts of a dead civilization.

GLOSSARY

Ahun. Moslem-Chinese priest.

Amban. Chinese high-commissioner in Lhasa under the Manchu dynasty.

Angkur. Empowerment, transmission of psychic energy.

Atman. Ego-soul, individual self.

Balchebuk. Tibetan for Communist.

Banner. Group of Mongolian tribes—an administrative and military subdivision of nomadic Mongolians.

Bardo. Psychic universe in which the soul wanders between its incarnations.

Bardo Thödol. Tibetan Book of The Dead.

Basmatchi. Moslem anti-Soviet guerillas in Soviet Turkestan.

Boddhisat. A soul who is on the threshold of nirvana and is about to reach Buddhahood—the technical status of what Westerners call a Living Buddha.

Brahman. A member of Hinduism's highest caste.

Brahmanic aperture. The sagittal suture on the crown of the head where the two parietal bones articulate.

Chakra. Psychic nerve-centre in which prana is stored.

Chang. Tibetan beer.

Chaprassi. Mounted servant who prepares lodgings for the night.

Chorten. Cone-like Tibetan cenotaph.

Chowkidar. Housekeeper in a dak-bungalow.

Chu. River.

Chura. Dried cheese.

Circular Road. A six-mile road encircling Lhasa—the most sacred pilgrimage in the Forbidden City.

Dak-bungalow. Bungalow at the disposal of travellers in India.

Damarus. Small drum made of two human skulls.

Delog. Lama who travels "beyond death" and returns to this earth.

Dilbu. Bell used by lamas during a religious service.

Dobdob. Policeman lama in a monastery.

Dorje. Thunderbolt-sceptre used by lamas during a religious service along with the dilbu.

Dragon throne. Imperial throne in Peking.

Dukhang. Assembly or prayer Hall.

Dukpa. Main sect among the Red Hat monks, unreformed part of the Lamaist clergy—mostly in Bhutan and Ladak.

Dzasa. Tibetan title, below that of kung.

Dzepön. Financial secretary—head of Tibet's lay administration.

Dzong. Tibetan fortress or fortified castle.

Dzong-Pön. Governor of a Tibetan province.

Garba. House of a grand lama or abbot of a monastery.

Gelukpa. Yellow Hat lama, follower of Tsong Kapa—reformed clergy and most numerous in Tibet.

Ghurka. A Nepalese, an inhabitant of Nepal.

Gomchen. Learned lama possessing unusual psychic powers.

Gompa. "A dwelling in solitude"—an isolated monastery.

Gonkhang. "Devil's Chamber of Horrors"—chapels in which are collected the most repulsive and frightening objects.

Great Doctrine. Gotama's teachings—the Buddhist doctrine.

Guru. Spiritual teacher and guide.

Gyalpo. Tibetan title for king.

Hatha Yoga. Yoga teaching mastery over the physical body.

Hinayana. "Little Vehicle" of the Buddhist system.

Hphobo. "Extractor of the consciousness" who assists the dying.

Huruldan. Mongolian People's assembly.

Hutuktu. Mongolian title for Living Buddha or "Trülku."

Jihad. Holy war of the Moslems.

Jimpa. Unleavened scones of wheat.

Kalon Lama. President of the Kashag.

Kangyur. Collection of sacred scriptures.

Kargyupa. One of the semi-reformed Red Hat sects.

Karma. Oriental law of spiritual cause and effect—the embodiment of fate.

Kashag. The higher cabinet of Tibet.

Khamba. A native of Kham, in eastern Tibet.

Khan. Mongolian title for king.

Khata. Ceremonial scarf made of white silk.

Kumbhack. Secret psychic technique leading to a state of complete catalepsy.

Kundalini Yoga. A section of raja yoga dealing with the acquisition of psychic powers.

Kung. Tibetan title, equivalent of duke.

Kushog. Tibetan equivalent of sir.

Kyilkhor. Magic diagram.

La. Mountain pass.

Lama. Monk belonging to the Buddhist sect of Lamaism.

Lamaism. An important part of the Mahayana system of Buddhism.

Lam Chung (see Short Path).

Laya Yoga. Yoga teaching mastery over the mind.

Lepcha. Original inhabitant of Sikkim.

Lhakhang. "House of the Gods"—great temple inside a monastery.

Like a lotus. To sit Buddha-wise.

Lung Gom. Secret technique which enables a devotee to travel at incredible speed.

Mahayana. "Big Vehicle" of the Buddhist system.

Manas. Mind-thought, in which the individual self is wrapped.

Mani wall. Walls made of stones inscribed with holy mantras.

Mantra. "Word of Power" or "Significant Sound"—sacred litany.

Nirvana. Universal soul into which individual souls disappear after having reached Buddhahood.

Om! Mani Padme Hum! Translates into: "Hail! Jewel in the Lotus!"—the most sacred mantra.

Peak secretary. Secretary of the Dalai Lama's court.

Peling. Foreigner (from overseas)—usually a Westerner.

Phantom body. A "trülku" or Living Buddha.

Phowa. Secret technique of consciousness transference between physical bodies—also of resuscitation of corpses.

Phurba. Ritual or magic dagger.

Prajna Paramita. "Gospel of Transcendental Wisdom"—a book on metaphysics.

Prana. "Vital Force"—a psychic fluid.

Ragdong. Huge ten-feet-long trumpet.

Ragyabpa. Special tribe of Tibet undertakers.

Raja Yoga. Yoga leading to Transcendental Consciousness.

Rimpoche. "Precious One"—an honorific title applied to learned lamas.

Ritöd. Isolated hermitage, usually located on a mountain peak.

Rmilam. Dream-state.

Sadhu. Indian ascetic.

Samadhi Yoga. The last part of raja yoga, leading to Supreme Illumination.

Sangsara. The world of phenomenon, whether physical or psychic, as opposed to nirvana.

Saung. Tibetan silver coin, worth about one cent.

Shape. Lay cabinet minister, member of the Kashag.

Short Path. "Lam Chung" in Tibetan—psychic technique which enables the devotee to reach Buddhahood in a single life-time.

Son of Heaven. Emperor of China.

Stupa. Open-air religious image, usually painted and carved out of a rock.

Ta Lama. Senior member of the Monks' cabinet.

Tengyur. Commentaries on the Kangyur.

Thabs. Method.

Thang. Flat tableland between mountain ranges.

Thanka. Painted sheets of silk.

Thought-consciousness. Tibetan equivalent of the Western concept of soul.

Trangka. Tibetan paper currency—note worth about ten cents.

Trapa. Monk-student of the Red Hat clergy—usually married.

Trülku. A Living Buddha or "Phantom Body"—a soul who stands on the threshold of nirvana but chooses to be reborn.

Tsa. Psychic nerve.

Tsam. Secluded dwelling of an anchorite, a "barrier."

Tsam Khang. Secluded dwelling attached to a monastery.

Tsampa. Roasted grains of barley—staple food of Tibetans.

Tsamspa. Secluded student of the occult, living in a tsam.

Tsatsik. "Root word"—written instructions from the Lhasa government to district commissioners.

Tso. Lake.

Tulpa. Ghost.

Tummo. Psycho-physical heat.

Tungyik Chenpo. Member of the Monks' cabinet—at the top of the clerical administration.

Turki. Native inhabitant of Chinese Turkestan.

Ulan. Mongolian for Red.

Urusso. Tibetan for Russian.

Void. Metaphysical concept which transcends all phenomena.

Yoga. The science of deep meditation which leads to psychic knowledge and eventually to Transcendental Knowledge.

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